AUG 5 1981



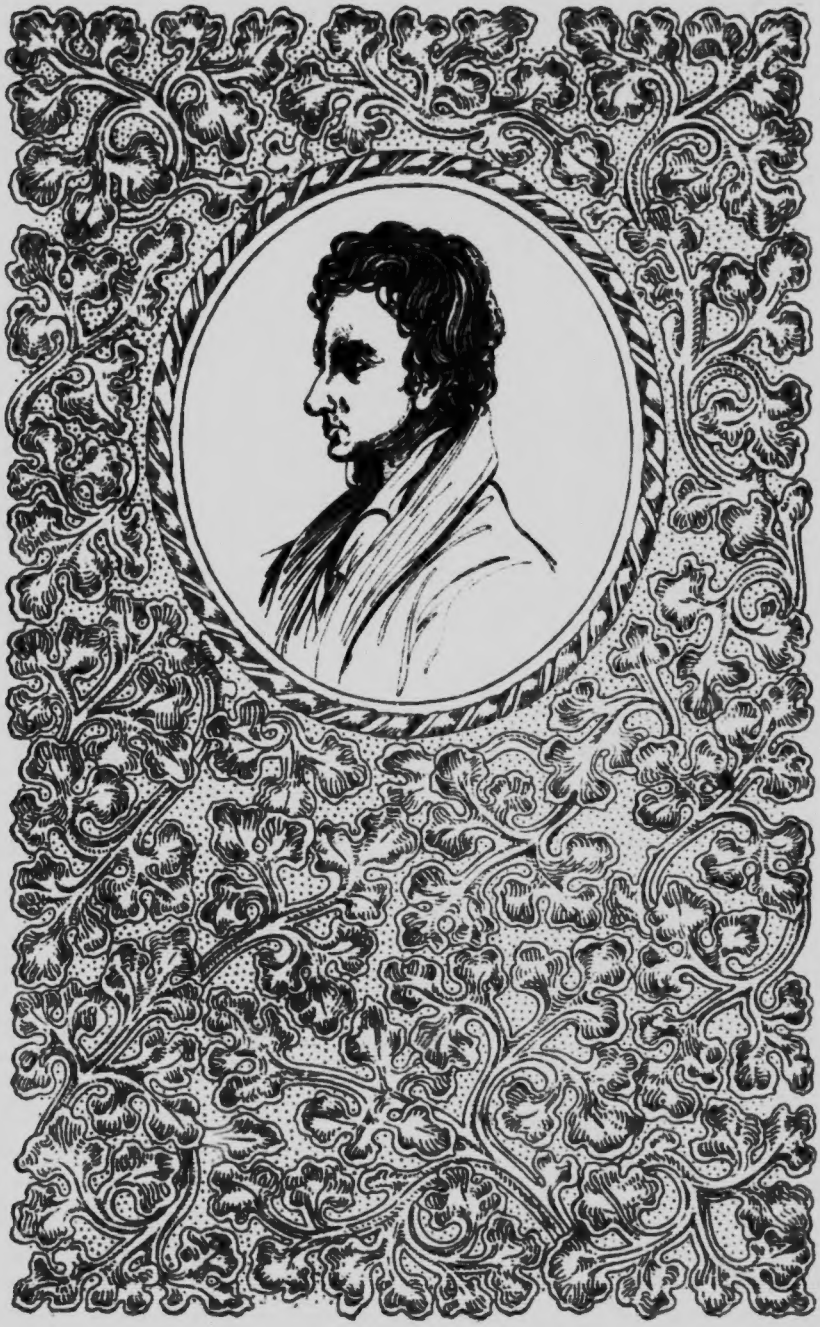
The World's Classics

XV

THE WORKS
OF
WILLIAM HAZLITT.—II.

SKETCHES AND ESSAYS

SCARBOROUGH
COLLEGE
LIBRARY



SKETCHES & ESSAYS

BY

WILLIAM HAZLITT

SKETCHES AND ESSAYS

BY

WILLIAM HAZLITT



HENRY FROWDE
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS
LONDON, NEW YORK AND TORONTO

WILLIAM HAZLITT.

Born: Maidstone, Kent, April 10, 1778.
Died: London, September 18, 1830.

These Essays were first collected and published in volume form in the year 1839. They were first printed in the 'World's Classics' in May 1902, and reprinted in May 1903 and April 1907.

Printed by R. & R. CLARK, LIMITED, *Edinburgh.*

CONTENTS

	PAGE
On Reading New Books	1
On Cant and Hypocrisy	17
Merry England	30
On a Sun-Dial	45
On Prejudice	56
Self-Love and Benevolence. (A Dialogue)	71
On Disagreeable People	104
On Knowledge of the World	119
On Fashion	137
On Nicknames	144
On Taste	153
Why the Heroes of Romances are Insipid	173
On the Conversation of Lords	185
The Letter-Bell	203
Envy	209
On the Spirit of Partisanship	216
Footmen	230
A Chapter on Editors	238

SKETCHES AND ESSAYS

ON READING NEW BOOKS

And what of this new book, that the whole world make such a rout about?—STERNE.

I CANNOT understand the rage manifested by the greater part of the world for reading New Books. If the public had read all those that have gone before, I can conceive how they should not wish to read the same work twice over; but when I consider the countless volumes that lie unopened, unregarded, unread, and unthought-of, I cannot enter into the pathetic complaints that I hear made that Sir Walter writes no more—that the press is idle—that Lord Byron is dead. If I have not read a book before, it is, to all intents and purposes, new to me, whether it was printed yesterday or three hundred years ago. If it be urged that it has no modern, passing incidents, and is out of date and old-fashioned, then it is so much the newer; it is farther removed from other works that I have lately read, from the familiar routine of ordinary life, and makes so much more addition to my knowledge. But many people would as soon think of putting on old armour as of taking up a book not published within the last month, or year at the utmost. There is a fashion in reading as well as in dress, which lasts only for the season. One

would imagine that books were, like women, the worse for being old ;[1] that they have a pleasure in being read for the first time ; that they open their leaves more cordially ; that the spirit of enjoyment wears out with the spirit of novelty ; and that, after a certain age, it is high time to put them on the shelf. This conceit seems to be followed up in practice. What is it to me that another—that hundreds or thousands have in all ages read a work? Is it on this account the less likely to give me pleasure, because it has delighted so many others? Or can I taste this pleasure by proxy? Or am I in any degree the wiser for their knowledge? Yet this might appear to be the inference. *Their* having read the work may be said to act upon us by sympathy, and the knowledge which so many other persons have of its contents deadens our curiosity and interest altogether. We set aside the subject as one on which others have made up their minds for us (as if we really could have ideas in their heads), and are quite on the alert for the next new work, teeming hot from the press, which we shall be the first to read, criticise, and pass an opinion on. Oh, delightful! To cut open the leaves, to inhale the fragrancy of the scarcely dry paper, to examine the type to see who is the printer (which is some clue to the value that is set upon the work), to launch out into regions of thought and invention never trod till now, and to explore characters that never met a human eye before—this is a luxury worth sacrificing a dinner-party, or a few hours of a spare morning to. Who, indeed, when the work is critical and full of expectation, would venture to dine out, or to face a coterie of blue-stockings in the evening, without having gone through this ordeal, or at least without hastily turning over a few of the first pages, while dressing, to be able to say that the beginning does not promise much, or to tell the name of the heroine?

[1] 'Laws are not like women, the worse for being old.'—*The Duke of Buckingham's Speech in the House of Lords, in Charles the Second's time.*

A new work is something in our power: we mount the bench, and sit in judgment on it; we can damn or recommend it to others at pleasure, can decry or extol it to the skies, and can give an answer to those who have not yet read it and expect an account of it; and thus show our shrewdness and the independence of our taste before the world have had time to form an opinion. If we cannot write ourselves, we become, by busying ourselves about it, a kind of *accessories after the fact*. Though not the parent of the bantling that 'has just come into this breathing world, scarce half made up,' without the rid of criticism and puffing, yet we are the gossips and foster-nurses on the occasion, with all the mysterious significance and self-importance of the tribe. If we wait, we must take our report from others; if we make haste, we may dictate ours to them. It is not a race, then, for priority of information, but for precedence in tattling and dogmatising. The work last out is the first that people talk and inquire about. It is the subject on the *tapis*—the cause that is pending. It is the last candidate for success (other claims have been disposed of), and appeals for this success to us, and us alone. Our predecessors can have nothing to say to this question, however they may have anticipated us on others; future ages, in all probability, will not trouble their heads about it; we are the panel. How hard, then, not to avail ourselves of our immediate privilege to give sentence of life or death—to seem in ignorance of what every one else is full of—to be behindhand with the polite, the knowing, the fashionable part of mankind—to be at a loss and dumbfounded, when all around us are in their glory, and figuring away, on no other ground than that of having read a work that we have not! Books that are to be written hereafter cannot be criticised by us; those that were written formerly have been criticised long ago: but a new book is the property, the prey of ephemeral criticism, which it darts triumphantly upon; there is a raw thin air of ignorance and uncertainty about it, not filled up by any recorded opinion; and curiosity, impertinence,

and vanity, rush eagerly into the vacuum. A new book is the fair field for petulance and coxcombry to gather laurels in—the butt set up for roving opinion to aim at. Can we wonder, then, that the circulating libraries are besieged by literary dowagers and their grand-daughters, when a new novel is announced? That Mail-Coach copies of the *Edinburgh Review* are or were coveted? That the Manuscript of the *Waverley Romances* is sent abroad in time for the French, German, or even Italian translation to appear on the same day as the original work, so that the longing Continental public may not be kept waiting an instant longer than their fellow-readers in the English metropolis, which would be as tantalising and insupportable as a little girl being kept without her new frock, when her sister's is just come home and is the talk and admiration of every one in the house? To be sure, there is something in the taste of the times; a modern work is expressly adapted to modern readers. It appeals to our direct experience, and to well-known subjects; it is part and parcel of the world around us, and is drawn from the same sources as our daily thoughts. There is, therefore, so far, a natural or habitual sympathy between us and the literature of the day, though this is a different consideration from the mere circumstance of novelty. An author now alive has a right to calculate upon the living public: he cannot count upon the dead, nor look forward with much confidence to those that are unborn. Neither, however, is it true that we are eager to read all new books alike: we turn from them with a certain feeling of distaste and distrust, unless they are recommended to us by some peculiar feature or obvious distinction. Only young ladies from the boarding-school, or milliners' girls read all the new novels that come out. It must be spoken of or against; the writer's name must be well known or a great secret; it must be a topic of discourse and a mark for criticism—that is, it must be likely to bring us into notice in some way—or we take no notice of it. There is a mutual and tacit understanding on this head. We can

no more read all the new books that appear, than we can read all the old ones that have disappeared from time to time. A question may be started here, and pursued as far as needful, whether, if an old and worm-eaten Manuscript were discovered at the present moment, it would be sought after with the same avidity as a new and hot-pressed poem, or other popular work? Not generally, certainly, though by a few with perhaps greater zeal. For it would not affect present interests, or amuse present fancies, or touch present manners, or fall in with the public *egotism* in any way: it would be the work either of some obscure author—in which case it would want the principle of excitement; or of some illustrious name, whose style and manner would be already familiar to those most conversant in the subject, and his fame established—so that as a matter of comment and controversy, it would only go to account on the old score: there would be no room for learned feuds and heart-burnings. Was there not a Manuscript of Cicero's talked of as having been discovered about a year ago? But we have heard no more of it. There have been several other cases, more or less in point, in our time or near it. A Noble Duke (which may serve to show at least the interest taken in books *not for being new*) some time ago gave £2[illegible] for a copy of the first edition of the *Decameron*: but did not read it. It has been a fashion also of late for noble and wealthy persons to go to a considerable expense in order to reprints of the old Chronicles and black-letter works. Does not this rather prove that the books did not circulate very rapidly or extensively, or such extraordinary patronage and liberality would not have been necessary? Mr. Thomas Taylor, at the instance, I believe, of the old Duke of Norfolk, printed fifty copies in quarto of a translation of the works of Plato and Aristotle. He did not choose that a larger impression should be struck off, lest these authors should get into the hands of the vulgar. There was no danger of a run in that way. I tried to read some of the Dialogues in the translation of Plato, but, I confess, could make nothing

of it: 'the logic was so different from ours!'[1] A startling experiment was made on this sort of retrospective curiosity, in the case of Ireland's celebrated Shakspeare forgery. The public there certainly manifested no backwardness nor lukewarmness: the enthusiasm was equal to the folly. But the spirit exhibited on this occasion was partly critical and polemical, and it is a problem whether an actual and undoubted play of Shakspeare's would have excited the same ferment; and, on the other hand, Shakspeare is an essential modern. People read and go to see his real plays, as well as his pretended ones. The *fuss* made about Ossian is another test to refer to. It was its being the supposed revival of an old work (known only by scattered fragments or lingering

[1] An expression borrowed from a voluble German scholar, who gave this as an excuse for not translating the *Critique of Pure Reason* into English. He might as well have said seriously, that the *Rule of Three* in German was different from ours. Mr. Taylor (the Platonist, as he was called) was a singular instance of a person in our time believing in the heathen mythology. He had a very beautiful wife. An impudent Frenchman, who came over to London, and lodged in the same house, made love to her, by pretending to worship her as Venus, and so thought to turn the tables on our philosopher. I once spent an evening with this gentleman at George Dyer's chambers, in Clifford's Inn, where there was no exclusion of persons or opinions. I remember he showed with some triumph two of his fingers, which had been bent so that he had lost the use of them, in copying out the manuscripts of Proclus and Plotinus in a fine Greek hand. Such are the trophies of human pride! It would be well if our deep studies often produced no other crookedness and deformity! I endeavoured (but in vain) to learn something from the heathen philosopher as to Plato's doctrine of abstract ideas being the foundation of particular ones, which I suspect has more truth in it than we moderns are willing to admit. Another friend of mine once breakfasted with Mr. Dyer (the most amiable and absent of hosts), when there was no butter, no knife to cut the loaf with, and the tea-pot was without a spout. My friend, after a few immaterial ceremonies, adjourned to Peele's coffee-house, close by, where he regaled himself on buttered toast, coffee, and the newspaper of the day (a newspaper possessed some interest when we were young); and the only interruption to his satisfaction was the fear that his host might suddenly enter, and be shocked at his imperfect hospitality. He would probably forget the circumstance altogether. I am afraid that this veteran of the old school has not received many proofs of the *archaism* of the prevailing taste; and that the corrections in his *History of the University of Cambridge* have cost him more than the public will ever repay him for.

tradition) which gave it its chief interest, though there was also a good deal of mystery and quackery concerned along with the din and stir of national jealousy and pretension. Who reads Ossian now? It is one of the reproaches brought against Buonaparte that he was fond of it when young. I cannot for myself see the objection. There is no doubt an antiquarian spirit always at work, and opposed to the spirit of novelty-hunting; but, though opposed, it is scarcely a match for it in a general and popular point of view. It is not long ago that I happened to be suggesting a new translation of *Don Quixote* to an enterprising bookseller; and his answer was — "We want new Don Quixotes." I believe I deprived the same active-minded person of a night's rest, by telling him there was the beginning of another novel by Goldsmith in existence. This, if it could be procured, would satisfy both tastes for the new and the old at once. I fear it is but a fragment, and that we must wait till a new Goldsmith appears. We may observe of late a strong craving after 'Memoirs,' and 'Lives of the Dead.' But these, it may be remarked, savour so much of the real and familiar, that the persons described differ from us only in being dead, which is a reflection to our advantage: or, if remote and romantic in their interest and adventures, they require to be bolstered up in some measure by the embellishments of modern style and criticism. The accounts of Petrarch and Laura, of Abelard and Eloise, have a lusciousness and warmth in the subject which contrast quaintly and pointedly with the coldness of the grave; and, after all, we prefer Pope's *Eloise and Abelard*, with the modern dress and flourishes, to the sublime and affecting simplicity of the original Letters.

In some very just and agreeable reflections on the story of *Abelard and Eloise*, in a late number of a contemporary publication, there is a quotation of some lines from Lucan, which Eloise is said to have repeated in broken accents as she was advancing to the altar to receive the veil:

O maxime conjux!
O thalamis indigne meis! Hoc juris habebat
In tantum fortuna caput? Cur impia nupsi,
Si miserum factura fui? Nunc accipe pœnas,
Sed quas sponte luam.[1]

This speech, quoted by another person, on such an occasion, might seem cold and pedantic; but from the mouth of the passionate and unaffected Eloise it cannot bear that interpretation. What sounding lines! What a pomp, and yet what a familiar boldness in their application—'proud as when blue Iris bends!' The reading this account brought forcibly to mind what has struck me often before—the unreasonableness of the complaint we constantly hear of the ignorance and barbarism of former ages, and the folly of restricting all refinement and literary elegance to our own. We are, indeed, indebted to the ages that have gone before us, and could not well do without them. But in all ages there will be found still others that have gone before with nearly equal lustre and advantage, though, by distance and the intervention of multiplied excellence, this lustre may be dimmed or forgotten. Had it then no existence? We might, with the same reason, suppose that the horizon is the last boundary and verge of the round earth. Still, as we advance, it recedes from us; and so time from its storehouse pours out an endless succession of the productions of art and genius; and the farther we explore the obscurity, other trophies and other landmarks rise up. It is only our ignorance that fixes a limit—as the mist gathered round the mountain's brow makes us fancy we are treading the edge of the universe! Here was Eloise living at a period when monkish indolence and superstition were at their height—in one of those that are emphatically called the *dark ages;* and yet, as she is led to the altar to make her last fatal vow, expressing her feelings in language quite natural to her, but from which the most accomplished and heroic of our modern females would shrink back with pretty and affected wonder and affright. The glowing and

[1] *Pharsalia*, lib. 8.

impetuous lines which she murmured, as she passed on, with spontaneous and rising enthusiasm, were engraven on her heart, familiar to her as her daily thoughts; her mind must have been full of them to overflowing, and at the same time enriched with other stores and sources of knowledge equally elegant and impressive; and we persist, notwithstanding this and a thousand similar circumstances, in indulging our surprise how people could exist, and see, and feel, in those days, without having access to our opportunities and acquirements, and how Shakspeare wrote long after, *in a barbarous age!* The mystery in this case is of our own making. We are struck with astonishment at finding a fine moral sentiment or a noble image nervously expressed in an author of the age of Queen Elizabeth; not considering that, independently of nature and feeling, which are the same in all periods, the writers of that day, who were generally men of education and learning, had such models before them as the one that has been just referred to—were thoroughly acquainted with those masters of classic thought and language, compared with whom, in all that relates to the artificial graces of composition, the most studied of the moderns are little better than Goths and Vandals. It is true, we have lost sight of, and neglected the former, because the latter have, in a great degree, superseded them, as the elevations nearest to us intercept those farthest off; but our not availing ourselves of this vantage ground is no reason why our forefathers should not (who had not our superfluity of choice), and most assuredly they did study and cherish the precious fragments of antiquity, collected together in their time, 'like sunken wreck and sumless treasuries'; and while they did this, we need be at no loss to account for any examples of grace, of force, or dignity in their writings, if these must always be traced back to a previous source. One age cannot understand how another could subsist without its lights, as one country thinks every other must be poor for want of its physical productions. This is a narrow and superficial view of

the subject: we should by all means rise above it. I am not for devoting the whole of our time to the study of the classics, or of any other set of writers, to the exclusion and neglect of nature; but I think we should turn our thoughts enough that way to convince us of the existence of genius and learning before our time, and to cure us of an overweening conceit of ourselves, and of a contemptuous opinion of the world at large. Every civilised age and country (and of these there is not one, but a hundred) has its literature, its arts, its comforts, large and ample, though we may know nothing of them: nor is it (except for our own sakes) important that we should.

Books have been so multiplied in our days (like the Vanity Fair of knowledge), and we have made such progress beyond ourselves in some points, that it seems at first glance as if we had monopolised every possible advantage, and the rest of the world must be left destitute and in darkness. This is the *cockneyism* (with leave be it spoken) of the nineteenth century. There is a tone of smartness and piquancy in modern writing, to which former examples may, in one sense, appear flat and pedantic. Our allusions are more pointed and personal: the ancients are, in this respect, formal and prosaic personages. Some one, not long ago, in this vulgar, shallow spirit of criticism (which sees everything from its own point of view), said that the tragedies of Sophocles and Æschylus were about as good as the pieces brought out at Sadler's Wells or the Adelphi Theatre. An oration of Demosthenes is thought dry and meagre, because it is not 'full of wise saws and modern instances': one of Cicero's is objected to as flimsy and extravagant, for the same reason. There is a style in one age which does not fall in with the taste of the public in another, as it requires greater effeminacy and softness, greater severity or simplicity, greater force or refinement. Guido was more admired than Raphael in his day, because the manners were grown softer without the strength: Sir Peter Lely was thought in his to have eclipsed Vandyke—an opinion that no one holds at

present: Holbein's faces must be allowed to be very different from Sir Thomas Lawrence's—yet the one was the favourite painter of Henry VIII., as the other is of George IV. What should we say in our time to the *euphuism* of the age of Elizabeth, when style was made a riddle and the court talked in conundrums? This, as a novelty and a trial of the wits, might take for a while: afterwards, it could only seem absurd. We must always make some allowance for a change of style, which those who are accustomed to read none but works written within the last twenty years neither can nor will make. When a whole generation read, they will read none but contemporary productions. The taste for literature becomes superficial, as it becomes universal, and is spread over a larger space. When ten thousand boarding-school girls, who have learnt to play on the piano, are brought out in the same season, Rossini will be preferred to Mozart, as the last new composer. I remember a very genteel young couple in the boxes of Drury Lane being very much scandalised some years ago at the phrase in *A New Way to pay Old Debts*—'an insolent piece of paper'—applied to the contents of a letter; it wanted the modern lightness and indifference. Let an old book be ever so good, it treats (generally speaking) of topics that are stale, in a style that has grown 'somewhat musty'; of manners that are exploded, probably by the very ridicule thus cast upon them; of persons that no longer figure on the stage; and of interests that have long since given place to others in the infinite fluctuations of human affairs. Longinus complains of the want of interest in the *Odyssey*, because it does not, like the *Iliad*, treat of war. The very complaint we make against the latter is that it treats of nothing else; or that, as Fuseli expresses it, everything is seen 'through the blaze of war.' Books of devotion are no longer read (if we read Irving's *Orations*, it is merely that we may go as a *lounge* to see the man): even attacks on religion are out of date and insipid. Voltaire's jests and the *Jew's Letters* in answer (equal in wit, and more than equal in

learning), repose quietly on the shelf together. We want something in England about Rent and the Poor-Laws, and something in France about the Charter—or Lord Byron. With the attempts, however, to revive superstition and intolerance, a spirit of opposition has been excited, and Pascal's *Provincial Letters* have been once more enlisted into the service. In France you meet with no one who can read the *New Eloise:* the *Princess of Cleves* is not even mentioned in these degenerate days. Is it not provoking with us to see the *Beggars' Opera* cut down to two acts, because some of the allusions are too broad, and others not understood? And in America this sterling satire is hooted off the stage, because, fortunately, they have no such state of manners as it describes before their eyes; and because, unfortunately, they have no conception of anything but what they see. America is singularly and awkwardly situated in this respect. It is a new country with an old language; and while everything about them is of a day's growth, they are constantly applying to us to know what to think of it, and taking their opinions from our books and newspapers with a strange mixture of servility and of the spirit of contradiction. They are an independent state in politics: in literature they are still a colony from us—not out of their leading strings, and strangely puzzled how to determine between the *Edinburgh* and *Quarterly Reviews*. We have naturalised some of their writers, who had formed themselves upon us. This is at once a compliment to them and to ourselves. Amidst the scramble and lottery for fame in the present day, besides puffing, which may be regarded as the hotbed of reputation, another mode has been attempted by *transplanting* it; and writers who are set down as drivellers at home, shoot up great authors on the other side of the water; pack up their all—a title-page and sufficient impudence; and a work, of which the *flocci-nauci-nihili-pili-fication*, in Shenstone's phrase, is well known to every competent judge, is *placarded* into eminence, and 'flames in the forehead of the morning sky' on the walls of Paris or St. Petersburg.

I dare not mention the instances, but so it is. Some reputations last only while the possessors live, from which one might suppose that they gave themselves a character for genius: others are cried up by their gossiping acquaintances, as long as they give dinners, and make their houses places of polite resort; and, in general, in our time, a book may be considered to have passed the ordeal that is mentioned at all three months after it is printed. Immortality is not even a dream—a boy's conceit; and posthumous fame is no more regarded by the author than by his bookseller.

This idle, dissipated turn seems to be a set-off to, or the obvious reaction of, the exclusive admiration of the ancients, which was formerly the fashion: as if the sun of human intellect rose and set at Rome and Athens, and the mind of man had never exerted itself to any purpose since. The ignorant, as well as the adept, were charmed only with what was obsolete and far-fetched, wrapped up in technical terms and in a learned tongue. Those who spoke and wrote a language which hardly any one at present even understood, must of course be wiser than we. Time, that brings so many reputations to decay, had embalmed others and rendered them sacred. From an implicit faith and overstrained homage paid to antiquity, we of the modern school have taken too strong a bias to what is new; and divide all wisdom and worth between ourselves and posterity —not a very formidable rival to our self-love, as we attribute all its advantages to ourselves, though we pretend to owe little or nothing to our predecessors. About the time of the French Revolution, it was agreed that the world had hitherto been in its dotage or its infancy; and that Mr. Godwin, Condorcet, and others were to begin a new race of men—a new epoch in society. Everything up to that period was to be set aside as puerile or barbarous; or, if there were any traces of thought and manliness now and then discoverable, they were to be regarded with wonder as prodigies —as irregular and fitful starts in that long sleep of reason and night of philosophy. In this liberal spirit

Mr. Godwin composed an Essay to prove that, till the publication of *The Inquiry concerning Political Justice*, no one knew how to write a word of common grammar, or a style that was not utterly uncouth, incongruous, and feeble. Addison, Swift, and Junius were included in this censure. The English language itself might be supposed to owe its stability and consistency, its roundness and polish, to the whirling motion of the French Revolution. Those who had gone before us were, like our grandfathers and grandmothers, decrepit, superannuated people, blind and dull; poor creatures, like flies in winter, without pith or marrow in them. The past was barren of interest—had neither thought nor object worthy to arrest our attention; and the future would be equally a senseless void, except as we projected ourselves and our theories into it. There is nothing I hate more than I do this exclusive, upstart spirit.

> By Heavens, I'd rather be
> A pagan suckled in a creed outworn,
> So might I, standing on some pleasant lea,
> Catch glimpses that might make me less forlorn,
> Have sight of Proteus coming from the sea,
> Or hear old Triton blow his wreathed horn.[1]

Neither do I see the good of it even in a personal and interested point of view. By despising all that has preceded us, we teach others to despise ourselves. Where there is no established scale nor rooted faith in excellence, all superiority—our own as well as that of others—soon comes to the ground. By applying the wrong end of the magnifying glass to all objects indiscriminately, the most respectable dwindle into insignificance, and the best are confounded with the worst. Learning, no longer supported by opinion, or genius by fame, is cast into the mire, and 'trampled under the hoofs of a swinish multitude.' I would rather endure the most blind and bigoted respect for great and illustrious names, than that pitiful, grovelling humour which has no pride in intellectual excellence, and no pleasure but in decrying those who have given

[1] Wordsworth's *Sonnets*.

proofs of it, and reducing them to its own level. If, with the diffusion of knowledge, we do not gain an enlargement and elevation of views, where is the benefit? If, by tearing asunder names from things, we do not leave even the name or shadow of excellence, it is better to let them remain as they were; for it is better to have something to admire than nothing—names, if not things—the shadow, if not the substance—the tinsel, if not the gold. All can now read and write equally; and, it is therefore presumed, equally well. Anything short of this sweeping conclusion is an invidious distinction; and those who claim it for themselves or other are *exclusionists* in letters. Every one at least can ca.. names—can invent a falsehood, or repeat a story against those who have galled their pragmatical pretensions by really adding to the stock of general amusement or instruction. Every one in a crowd has the power to throw dirt: nine out of ten have the inclination. It is curious that, in an age when the most universally admitted claim to public distinction is literary merit, the attaining this distinction is almost a sure title to public contempt and obloquy.[1] They cry you up, because you are unknown, and do not excite their jealousy; and run you down, when they have thus distinguished you, out of envy and spleen at the very idol they have set up. A public favourite is 'kept like an apple in the jaw of an ape—first mouthed to be afterwards swallowed. When they need what you have gleaned, it is but squeezing you, and sponge you shall be dry again.' At first they think only of the pleasure or advantage they receive: but, on reflection, they are mortified at the superiority implied in this involuntary concession, and are determined to be even with you the very first opportunity. What is the prevailing spirit of modern literature? To defame men of letters. What are the publications that succeed? Those that pretend to teach the public that the persons they have been accustomed unwittingly to

[1] Is not this partly owing to the disappointment of the public at finding any defect in their idol?

look up to as the lights of the earth are no better than themselves, or a set of vagabonds, miscreants that should be hunted out of society.[1] Hence men of letters, losing their self-respect, become government tools, and prostitute their talents to the most infamous purposes, or turn *dandy scribblers*, and set up for gentlemen authors in their own defence. I like the Order of the Jesuits better than this; they made themselves respected by the laity, kept their own secret, and did not prey on one another. Resume then, O Learning, thy robe pontifical; clothe thyself in pride and purple; join the sacred to the profane; wield both worlds; instead of twopenny trash and mechanics' magazines, issue bulls and decretals; say not, let there be light, but darkness visible; draw a bandage over the eyes of the ignorant and unlettered; hang the terrors of superstition and despotism over them;—and for thy pains they will bless thee; children will pull off their caps as thou dost pass; women will courtesy; the old will wipe their beards; and thou wilt rule once more over the base serving people, clowns, and nobles, with a rod of iron!

FLORENCE, *May* 1825.

[1] An old friend of mine, when he read the abuse and Billingsgate poured out in certain Tory publications, used to congratulate himself upon it as a favourable sign of the times, and of the progressive improvement of our manners. Where we now called names, we formerly burnt each other at a stake; and all the malice of the heart flew to the tongue and vented itself in scolding, instead of crusades and *auto da fés*—the nobler revenge of our ancestors for a difference of opinion. An author now libels a prince; and, if he takes the law of him, or throws him into gaol, it is looked upon as a harsh and ungentlemanly proceeding. He, therefore, gets a dirty secretary to employ a dirty bookseller, to hire a set of dirty scribblers, to pelt him with dirt and cover him with blackguard epithets till he is hardly in a condition to walk the streets. This is hard measure, no doubt, and base ingratitude on the part of the public, according to the imaginary dignity and natural precedence which authors take of kings; but the latter are men, and will have their revenge where they can get it. They have no longer their old summary appeal—their will may still be good—to the dungeon and the dagger. Those who 'speak evil of dignities' may, therefore, think themselves well off in being merely *sent to Coventry*; and, besides, if they have *pluck*, they can make a Parthian retreat, and shoot poisoned arrows behind them. The good people of Florence lift up their hands when they are shown the caricatures in the *Queen's Matrimonial Ladder*, and ask if they are really a likeness of the King!

ON CANT AND HYPOCRISY

If to do were as easy as to teach others what were good to be done, chapels had been churches, and poor men's cottages princes' palaces.

Mr. Addison, it is said, was fond of tippling; and Curll, it is added, when he called on him in the morning, used to ask as a particular favour for a glass of Canary, by way of ingratiating himself, and that the other might have a pretence to join him and finish the bottle. He fell a martyr to this habit, and *yet* (some persons more nice than wise exclaim) he desired that the young Earl of Warwick might attend him on his death-bed, 'to see how a Christian could die!' I see no inconsistency nor hypocrisy in this. A man may be a good Christian, a sound believer, and a sincere lover of virtue, and have, notwithstanding, one or more failings. If he had recommended it to others to get drunk, then I should have said he was a hypocrite, and that his pretended veneration for the Christian religion was a mere cloak put on to suit the purposes of fashion or convenience. His doing what it condemned was no proof of any such thing: 'The spirit was willing, but the flesh was weak.' He is a hypocrite who professes what he does not believe: not he who does not practise all he wishes or approves. It might on the same ground be argued, that a man is a hypocrite who admires Raphael or Shakespeare, because he cannot paint like the one, or write like the other. If any one really despised what he affected outwardly to admire, this would be hypocrisy. If he affected to admire it a great deal more than he really did, this

would be cant. Sincerity has to do with the connection between our words and thoughts, and not between our belief and actions. The last constantly belie the strongest convictions and resolutions in the best of men; it is only the base and dishonest who give themselves credit with their tongue, for sentiments and opinions which in their hearts they disown.

I do not therefore think that the old theological maxim—"The greater the sinner, the greater the saint"—is so utterly unfounded. There is some mixture of truth in it. For as long as man is composed of two parts, body and soul, and while these are allowed to pull different ways, I see no reason why, in proportion to the length the one goes, the opposition or reaction of the other should not be more violent. It is certain, for example, that no one makes such good resolutions as the sot and the gambler in their moments of repentance, or can be more impressed with the horrors of their situation;—should this disposition, instead of a transient, idle pang, by chance become lasting, who can be supposed to feel the beauty of temperance and economy more, or to look back with greater gratitude to their escape from the trammels of vice and passion? Would the ingenious and elegant author of the *Spectator* feel less regard for the Scriptures, because they denounced in pointed terms the infirmity that 'most easily beset him,' that was the torment of his life, and the cause of his death? Such reasoning would be true, if man was a simple animal or a logical machine, and all his faculties and impulses were in strict unison; instead of which they are eternally at variance, and no one hates or takes part against himself more heartily or heroically than does the same individual. Does he not pass sentence on his own conduct? Is not his conscience both judge and accuser? What else is the meaning of all our resolutions against ourselves, as well as of our exhortations to others? *Video meliora proboque, deteriora sequor*, is not the language of hypocrisy, but of human nature.

The hypocrisy of priests has been a butt for ridicule

in all ages; but I am not sure that there has not been more wit than philosophy in it. A priest, it is true, is obliged to affect a greater degree of sanctity than ordinary men, and probably more than he possesses; and this is so far, I am willing to allow, hypocrisy and solemn grimace. But I cannot admit, that though he may exaggerate, or even make an ostentatious display of religion and virtue through habit and spiritual pride, that this is a proof he has not these sentiments in his heart, or that his whole behaviour is the mere acting of a part. His character, his motives, are not altogether pure and sincere: are they therefore all false and hollow? No such thing. It is contrary to all our observation and experience so to interpret it. We all wear some disguise—make some professions—use some artifice to set ourselves off as being better than we are: and yet it is not denied that we have some good intentions and praiseworthy qualities at bottom, though we may endeavour to keep some others that we think less to our credit as much as possible in the background:—why then should we not extend the same favourable construction to monks and priests, who may be sometimes caught tripping as well as other men—with less excuse, no doubt; but if it is also with greater remorse of conscience, which probably often happens, their pretensions are not all downright, barefaced imposture. Their sincerity, compared with that of other men, can only be judged of by the proportion between the degree of virtue they profess, and that which they practise, or at least carefully seek to realise. To conceive it otherwise is to insist that characters must be all perfect or all vicious—neither of which suppositions is even possible. If a clergyman is notoriously a drunkard, a debauchee, a glutton, or a scoffer, then for him to lay claim at the same time to extraordinary inspirations of faith or grace, is both scandalous and ridiculous. The scene between the Abbot and the poor brother in the *Duenna* is an admirable exposure of this double-faced dealing. But because a parson has a relish for the good things of this life, or what is commonly called *a liquorish tooth in his*

head (beyond what he would have it supposed by others, or even by himself), that he has therefore no fear or belief of the next, I hold for a crude and vulgar prejudice. If a poor half-starved parish priest pays his court to an *olla podrida*, or a venison pasty, with uncommon *gusto*, shall we say that he has no other sentiments in offering his devotions to a crucifix, or in counting his beads? I see no more ground for such an inference, than for affirming that Handel was not in earnest when he sat down to compose a Symphony, because he had at the same time perhaps a bottle of cordials in his cupboard; or that Raphael was not entitled to the epithet of *divine*, because he was attached to the Fornarina. Everything has its turn in this chequered scene of things, unless we prevent it from taking its turn by over-rigid conditions, or drive men to despair or the most callous effrontery by erecting a standard of perfection, to which no one can conform in reality. Thomson, in his *Castle of Indolence* (a subject on which his pen ran riot), has indulged in rather a free description of 'a little round, fat, oily man of God, who—

> 'Shone all glistening with ungodly dew,
> If a tight damsel chanced to trippen by;
> Which when observed, he shrunk into his mew,
> And straight would recollect his piety anew.'

Now, was the piety in this case the less real, because it had been forgotten for a moment? Or even if this motive should not prove the strongest in the end, would this therefore show that it was none, which is necessary to the argument here combated, or to make out our little plump priest a very knave? A priest may be honest, and yet err; as a woman may be modest, and yet half-inclined to be a rake. So the virtue of prudes may be suspected, though not their sincerity. The strength of their passions may make them more conscious of their weakness, and more cautious of exposing themselves; but not more to blind others than as a guard upon themselves. Again, suppose a clergyman hazards a jest upon sacred subjects, does it follow that he does not believe a word of the matter?

Put the case that any one else, encouraged by his example, takes up the banter or levity, and see what effect it will have upon the reverend divine. He will turn round like a serpent trod upon, with all the vehemence and asperity of the most bigoted orthodoxy. Is the dictatorial and exclusive spirit then put on merely as a mask and to browbeat others? No; but he thinks he is privileged to trifle with the subject safely himself, from the store of evidence he has in reserve, and from the nature of his functions; but he is afraid of serious consequences being drawn from what others might say, or from his seeming to countenance it; and the moment the Church is in danger, or his own faith brought in question, his attachment to each becomes as visible as his hatred to those who dare to impugn either the one or the other. A woman's attachment to her husband is not to be suspected, if she will allow no one to abuse him but herself. It has been remarked, that with the spread of liberal opinions, or a more general scepticism on articles of faith, the clergy and religious persons in general have become more squeamish and jealous of any objections to their favourite doctrines: but this is what must follow in the natural course of things—the resistance being always in proportion to the danger; and arguments and books that were formerly allowed to pass unheeded, because it was supposed impossible they could do any mischief, are now denounced or prohibited with the most zealous vigilance, from a knowledge of the contagious nature of their influence and contents. So in morals, it is obvious that the greatest nicety of expression and allusion must be observed, where the manners are the most corrupt, and the imagination most easily excited, not out of mere affectation, but as a dictate of common sense and decency.

One of the finest remarks that has been made in modern times, is that of Lord Shaftesbury, that there is no such thing as a perfect Theist, or an absolute Atheist; that whatever may be the general conviction entertained on the subject, the evidence is not and

cannot be at all times equally present to the mind; that even if it were, we are not in the same humour to receive it: a fit of the gout, a shower of rain shakes our best-established conclusions; and according to circumstances and the frame of mind we are in, our belief varies from the most sanguine enthusiasm to lukewarm indifference, or the most gloomy despair. There is a point of conceivable faith which might prevent any lapse from virtue, and reconcile all contrarieties between theory and practice; but this is not to be looked for in the ordinary course of nature, and is reserved for the abodes of the blest. Here, 'upon this bank and shoal of time,' the utmost we can hope to attain is, a strong habitual belief in the excellence of virtue, or the dispensations of Providence; and the conflict of the passions, and their occasional mastery over us, far from disproving or destroying this general, rational conviction, often fling us back more forcibly upon it, and like other infidelities and misunderstandings, produce all the alternate remorse and raptures of repentance and reconciliation.

It has been frequently remarked that the most obstinate heretic or confirmed sceptic, witnessing the service of the Roman Catholic Church, the elevation of the host amidst the sounds of music, the pomp of ceremonies, the embellishments of art, feels himself spell-bound; and is almost persuaded to become a renegado to his reason or his religion. Even in hearing a vespers chanted on the stage, or in reading an account of a torch-light procession in a romance, a superstitious awe creeps over the frame, and we are momentarily charmed out of ourselves. When such is the obvious and involuntary influence of circumstances on the imagination, shall we say that a monkish recluse surrounded from his childhood by all this pomp, a stranger to any other faith, who has breathed no other atmosphere, and all whose meditations are bent on this one subject both by interest and habit and duty, is to be set down as a rank and heartless mountebank in the professions he makes of belief in it, because his thoughts

may sometimes wander to forbidden subjects, or his feet stumble on forbidden ground? Or shall not the deep shadows of the woods in Vallombrosa enhance the solemnity of this feeling, or the icy horrors of the Grand Chartreux add to its elevation and its purity? To argue otherwise is to misdeem of human nature, and to limit its capacities for good or evil by some narrow-minded standard of our own. Man is neither a god nor a brute; but there is a prosaic and a poetical side to everything concerning him, and it is as impossible absolutely and for a constancy to exclude either one or the other from the mind, as to make him live without air or food. The *ideal*, the empire of thought and aspiration after truth and good, is inseparable from the nature of an intellectual being—what right have we then to catch at every strife which in the mortified professors of religion the spirit wages with the flesh as grossly vicious? or at every doubt, the bare suggestion of which fills them with consternation and despair, as a proof of the most glaring hypocrisy? The grossnesses of religion and its stickling for mere forms as its essence, have given a handle, and a just one, to its impugners. At the feast of Ramadan (says Voltaire) the Mussulmans wash and pray five times a day, and then fall to cutting one another's throats again with the greatest deliberation and goodwill. The two things, I grant, are sufficiently at variance; but they are, I contend, equally sincere in both. The Mahometans are savages, but they are not the less true believers—they hate their enemies as heartily as they revere the Koran. This, instead of showing the fallacy of the *ideal* principle, shows its universality and indestructible essence. Let a man be as bad as he will, as little refined as possible, and indulge whatever hurtful passions or gross vices he thinks proper, these cannot occupy the whole of his time; and in the intervals between one scoundrel action and another he may and must have better thoughts, and may have recourse to those of religion (true or false) among the number, without in this being guilty of hypocrisy or of

making a jest of what is considered as sacred. This, I take it, is the whole secret of Methodism, which is a sort of modern vent for the ebullitions of the spirit through the gaps of unrighteousness.

We often see that a person condemns in another the very thing he is guilty of himself. Is this hypocrisy? It may, or it may not. If he really feels none of the disgust and abhorrence he expresses, this is quackery and impudence. But if he really expresses what he feels (and he easily may, for it is the abstract idea he contemplates in the case of another, and the immediate temptation to which he yields in his own, so that he probably is not even conscious of the identity or connection between the two), then this is not hypocrisy, but want of strength and keeping in the moral sense. All morality consists in squaring our actions and sentiments to our ideas of what is fit and proper; and it is the incessant struggle and alternate triumph of the two principles, the *ideal* and the physical, that keeps up this 'mighty coil and pudder' about vice and virtue, and is one great source of all the good and evil in the world. The mind of man is like a clock that is always running [illegible], and requires to be as constantly wound up. The [illegible]principle is the master-key that winds it up, and [illegible]out which it would come to a stand: the sensual and selfish feelings are the dead weights that pull it down to the gross and grovelling. Till the intellectual faculty is destroyed (so that the mind sees nothing beyond itself, or the present moment), it is impossible to have all brutal depravity; till the material and physical are done away with (so that it shall contemplate everything from a purely spiritual and disinterested point of view), it is impossible to have all virtue. There must be a mixture of the two, as long as man is compounded of opposite materials, a contradiction and an eternal competition for the mastery. I by no means think a single bad action condemns a man, for he probably condemns it as much as you do; nor a single bad habit, for he is probably trying all his life to get rid of it. A man is only thoroughly profligate

when he has lost the sense of right and wrong; or a thorough hypocrite, when he has not even the wish to be what he appears. The greatest offence against virtue is to speak ill of it. To recommend certain things is worse than to practise them. There may be an excuse for the last in the frailty of passion; but the former can arise from nothing but an utter depravity of disposition. Any one may yield to temptation, and yet feel a sincere love and aspiration after virtue: but he who maintains vice in theory, has not even the conception or capacity for virtue in his mind. Men err: fiends only make a mock at goodness.

We sometimes deceive ourselves, and think worse of human nature than it deserves, in consequence of judging of character from names, and classes, and modes of life. No one is simply and absolutely any one thing, though he may be branded with it as a name. Some persons have expected to see his crimes written in the face of a murderer, and have been disappointed because they did not, as if this impeached the distinction between virtue and vice. Not at all. The circumstance only showed that the man was other things, and had other feelings besides those of a murderer. If he had nothing else—if he fed on nothing else—if he had dreamt of nothing else but schemes of murder, his features would have expressed nothing else: but this perfection in vice is not to be expected from the contradictory and mixed nature of our motives. Humanity is to be met with in a den of robbers; nay, modesty in a brothel. Even among the most abandoned of the other sex, there is not unfrequently found to exist (contrary to all that is generally supposed) one strong and individual attachment, which remains unshaken to the last. Virtue may be said to steal, like a guilty thing, into the secret haunts of vice and infamy; it clings to their devoted victim, and will not be driven quite away. Nothing can destroy the human heart. Again, there is a heroism in crime, as well as in virtue. Vice and infamy have also their altars and their religion. This makes nothing in their

favour, but is a proof of the heroical disinterestedness of man's nature, and that whatever he does, he must fling a dash of romance and sublimity into 't; just as some grave biographer has said of Shakspeare, that 'even when he killed a calf, he made a speech and did it in a great style.'

It is then impossible to get rid of this original distinction and contradictory bias, and to reduce everything to the system of French levity and Epicurean indifference. Wherever there is a capacity of conceiving of things as different from what they are, there must be a principle of taste and selection—a disposition to make them better, and a power to make them worse. Ask a Parisian milliner if she does not think one bonnet more becoming than another—a Parisian dancing-master if French grace is not better than English awkwardness—a French cook if all sauces are alike—a French *blacklegs* if all throws are equal on the dice? It is curious that the French nation restrict rigid rules and fixed principles to cookery and the drama, and maintain that the great drama of human life is entirely a matter of caprice and fancy. No one will assert that Raphael's histories, that Claude's landscapes are not better than a daub: but if the expression in one of Raphael's faces is better than the most mean and vulgar, how resist the consequence that the feeling so expressed is better also? It does not appear to me that all faces or all actions are alike. If goodness were only a theory, it were a pity it should be lost to the world. There are a number of things, the idea of which is a clear gain to the mind. Let people, for instance, rail at friendship, genius, freedom, as long as they will—the very names of these despised qualities are better than anything else that could be substituted for them, and embalm even the most envenomed satire against them. It is no small consideration that the mind is capable even of feigning such things. So I would contend against that reasoning which would have it thought that if religion is not true, there is no difference between mankind and the beasts that perish;—I

should say, that this distinction is equally proved, if religion is supposed to be a mere fabrication of the human mind; the capacity to conceive it makes the difference. The idea alone of an overruling Providence, or of a future state, is as much a distinctive mark of a superiority of nature, as the invention of the mathematics, which are true—or of poetry, which is a fable. Whatever the truth or falsehood of our speculations, the power to make them is peculiar to ourselves.

The contrariety and warfare of different faculties and dispositions within us has not only given birth to the Manichean and Gnostic heresies, and to other superstitions of the East, but will account for many of the mummeries and dogmas both of Popery and Calvinism —confession, absolution, justification by faith, etc.; which, in the hopelessness of attaining perfection, and our dissatisfaction with ourselves for falling short of it, are all substitutes for actual virtue, and an attempt to throw the burden of a task, to which we are unequal or only half disposed, on the merits of others, or on outward forms, ceremonies, and professions of faith. Hence the crowd of

> Eremites and friars,
> White, black, and grey, with all their trumpery.

If we do not conform to the law, we at least acknowledge the jurisdiction of the court. A person does wrong; he is sorry for it; and as he still feels himself liable to error, he is desirous to make atonement as well as he can, by ablutions, by tithes, by penance, by sacrifices, or other voluntary demonstrations of obedience, which are in his power, though his passions are not, and which prove that his will is not refractory, and that his understanding is right towards God. The stricter tenets of Calvinism, which allow of no medium between grace and reprobation, and doom man to eternal punishment for every breach of the moral law, as an equal offence against infinite truth and justice, proceed (like the paradoxical doctrine of the Stoics) from taking a

half-view of this subject, and considering man as amenable only to the dictates of his understanding and his conscience, and not excusable from the temptations and frailty of human ignorance and passion. The mixing up of religion and morality together, or the making us accountable for every word, thought, or action, under no less a responsibility than our everlasting future welfare or misery, has also added incalculably to the difficulties of self-knowledge, has superinduced a violent and spurious state of feeling, and made it almost impossible to distinguish the boundaries between the true and false, in judging of human conduct and motives. A religious man is afraid of looking into the state of his soul, lest at the same time he should reveal it to Heaven; and tries to persuade himself that by shutting his eyes to his true character and feelings, they will remain a profound secret, both here and hereafter. This is a strong engine and irresistible inducement to self-deception; and the more zealous any one is in his convictions of the truth of religion, the more we may suspect the sincerity of his pretensions to piety and morality.

Thus, though I think there is very little downright hypocrisy in the world, I do think there is a great deal of *cant*—'cant religious, cant political, cant literary,' etc., as Lord Byron said. Though few people have the face to set up for the very thing they in their hearts despise, we almost all want to be thought better than we are, and affect a greater admiration or abhorrence of certain things than we really feel. Indeed, some degree of affectation is as necessary to the mind as dress is to the body; we must overact our part in some measure, in order to produce any effect at all. There was formerly the two hours' sermon, the long-winded grace, the nasal drawl, the uplifted hands and eyes; all which, though accompanied with some corresponding emotion, expressed more than was really felt, and were in fact intended to make up for the conscious deficiency. As our interest in anything wears out with time and habit, we exaggerate the outward symptoms of zeal as

mechanical helps to devotion, dwell the longer on our words as they are less felt, and hence the very origin of the term, *cant*. The cant of sentimentality has succeeded to that of religion. There is a cant of humanity, of patriotism and loyalty—not that people do not feel these emotions, but they make too great a *fuss* about them, and drawl out the expression of them till they tire themselves and others. There is a cant about Shakspeare. There is a cant about *Political Economy* just now. In short, there is and must be a cant about everything that excites a considerable degree of attention and interest, and that people would be thought to know and care rather more about them than they actually do. Cant is the voluntary overcharging or prolongation of a real sentiment; hypocrisy is the setting up a pretension to a feeling you never had and have no wish for. There are people who are made up of *cant*, that is, of mawkish affectation and sensibility; but who have not sincerity enough to be *hypocrites*, that is, have not hearty dislike or contempt enough for anything, to give the lie to their puling professions of admiration and esteem for it.

MERRY ENGLAND

St. George for merry England!

This old-fashioned epithet might be supposed to have been bestowed ironically, or on the old principle—*Ut lucus a non lucendo.* Yet there is something in the sound that hits the fancy, and a sort of truth beyond appearances. To be sure, it is from a dull, homely ground that the gleams of mirth and jollity break out; but the streaks of light that tinge the evening sky are not the less striking on that account. The beams of the morning sun shining on the lonely glades, or through the idle branches of the tangled forest, the leisure, the freedom, 'the pleasure of going and coming without knowing where,' the troops of wild deer, the sports of the chase, and other rustic gambols, were sufficient to justify the well-known appellation of 'Merry Sherwood,' and in like manner, we may apply the phrase to *Merry England.* The smile is not the less sincere because it does not always play upon the cheek; and the jest is not the less welcome, nor the laugh less hearty, because they happen to be a relief from care or leaden-eyed melancholy. The instances are the more precious as they are rare; and we look forward to them with the greater goodwill, or back upon them with the greater gratitude, as we drain the last drop in the cup with particular relish. If not always gay or in good spirits, we are glad when any occasion draws us out of our natural gloom, and disposed to make the most of it. We may say with *Silence* in the play, 'I have been merry once ere now'—and this once was to serve him

all his life; for he was a person of wonderful silence and gravity, though 'he chirped over his cups,' and announced with characteristic glee that 'there were pippins and cheese to come.' *Silence* was in this sense a merry man, that is, he would be merry if he could, and a very great economy of wit, like very slender fare, was a banquet to him, from the simplicity of his taste and habits. 'Continents,' says Hobbes, 'have most of what they contain'—and in this view it may be contended that the English are the merriest people in the world, since they only show it on high-days and holidays. They are then like a school-boy let loose from school, or like a dog that has slipped his collar. They are not gay like the French, who are one eternal smile of self-complacency, tortured into affectation, or spun out into languid indifference, nor are they voluptuous and immersed in sensual indolence, like the Italians; but they have that sort of intermittent, fitful, irregular gaiety, which is neither worn out by habit, nor deadened by passion, but is sought with avidity as it takes the mind by surprise, is startled by a sense of oddity and incongruity, indulges its wayward humours or lively impulses, with perfect freedom and lightness of heart, and seizes occasion by the forelock, that it may return to serious business with more cheerfulness, and have something to beguile the hours of thought or sadness. I do not see how there can be high spirits without low ones; and everything has its price according to circumstances. Perhaps we have to pay a heavier tax on pleasure, than some others: what skills it, so long as our good spirits and good hearts enable us to bear it?

'They' (the English), says Froissart, 'amused themselves sadly after the fashion of their country'—*ils se rejouissoient tristement selon la coutume de leur pays.* They have indeed a way of their own. Their mirth is a relaxation from gravity, a challenge to dull care to be gone; and one is not always clear at first, whether the appeal is successful. The cloud may still hang on the brow; the ice may not thaw at once. To help them

out in their new character is an act of charity. Anything short of hanging or drowning is something to begin with. They do not enter into their amusements the less doggedly because they may plague others. They like a thing the better for hitting them a rap on the knuckles, for making their blood tingle. They do not dance or sing, but they make good cheer—'eat, drink, and are merry.' No people are fonder of field-sports, Christmas gambols, or practical jests. Blind-man's-buff, hunt-the-slipper, hot-cockles, and snap-dragon, are all approved English games, full of laughable surprises and 'hair-breadth 'scapes,' and serve to amuse the winter fireside after the roast-beef and plum-pudding, the spiced ale and roasted crab, thrown (hissing-hot) into the foaming tankard. Punch (not the liquor, but the puppet) is not, I fear, of English origin; but there is no place I take it, where he finds himself more at home or meets a more joyous welcome, where he collects greater crowds at the corners of streets, where he opens the eyes or distends the cheeks wider, or where the bangs and blows, the uncouth gestures, ridiculous anger, and screaming voice of the chief performer excite more boundless merriment or louder bursts of laughter among all ranks and sets of people. An English theatre is the very throne of pantomime; nor do I believe that the gallery and boxes of Drury Lane or Covent Garden filled on the proper occasion with holiday folks (big or little) yield the palm for undisguised, tumultuous, inextinguishable laughter to any spot in Europe. I do not speak of the refinement of the mirth (this is no fastidious speculation) but of its cordiality, on the return of these long-looked-for and licensed periods; and I may add here, by way of illustration, that the English common people are a sort of grown children, spoiled and sulky perhaps, but full of glee and merriment, when their attention is drawn off by some sudden and striking object. The May-pole is almost gone out of fashion among us: but May-day, besides its flowering hawthorns and its pearly dews, has still its boasted exhibition of painted chimney-

sweepers and their Jack-o'-the-Green, whose tawdry finery, bedizened faces, unwonted gestures, and short-lived pleasures call forth good-humoured smiles and looks of sympathy in the spectators. There is no place where trap-ball, fives, prison-base, football, quoits, bowls are better understood or more successfully practised; and the very names of a cricket bat and ball make English fingers tingle What happy days must 'Long Robinson' have passed in getting ready his wickets and mending his bats, who, when two of the fingers of his right hand were struck off by the violence of a ball, had a screw fastened to it to hold the bat, and with the other hand still sent the ball thundering against the boards that bounded *Old Lord's cricket-ground!* What delightful hours must have been his in looking forward to the matches that were to come, in recounting the feats he had performed in those that were past! I have myself whiled away whole mornings in seeing him strike the ball (like a countryman mowing with a scythe) to the farthest extremity of the smooth, level, sun-burnt ground; and with long, awkward strides count the notches that made victory sure! Then again, cudgel-playing, quarter-staff, bull and badger-baiting, cock-fighting are almost the peculiar diversions of this island, and often objected to us as barbarous and cruel; horse-racing is the delight and ruin of numbers; and the noble science of boxing is all our own. Foreigners can scarcely understand how we can squeeze pleasure out of this pastime; the luxury of hard blows given or received; the joy of the ring; the perseverance of the combatants.[1] The English also

[1] 'The gentle and free passage of arms at Ashby' was, we are told, so called by the chroniclers of the time, on account of the feats of horsemanship and the quantity of knightly blood that was shed. This last circumstance was perhaps necessary to qualify it with the epithet of 'gentle,' in the opinion of some of these historians. I think the reason why the English are the bravest nation on earth is, that the thought of blood or a delight in cruelty is not the chief excitement with them. Where it is, there is necessarily a *reaction*; for though it may add to our eagerness and savage ferocity in inflicting wounds, it does not enable us to endure them with greater patience The English are led to the attack or sustain it equally

excel, or are not excelled in wiring a hare, in stalking a deer, in shooting, fishing, and hunting. England to this day boasts her Robin Hood and his merry men, that stout archer and outlaw and patron-saint of the sporting-calendar. What a cheerful sound is that of the hunters, issuing from the autumnal wood and sweeping over hill and dale!

> —A cry more tuneable
> Was never hallooʼd to by hound or horn.

What sparkling richness in the scarlet coats of the riders, what a glittering confusion in the pack, what spirit in the horses, what eagerness in the followers on foot, as they disperse over the plain, or force their way over hedge and ditch! Surely, the coloured prints and pictures of these, hung up in gentlemen's halls and village alehouses, however humble, as works of art, have more life and health and spirit in them, and mark the pith and nerve of the national character more creditably than the mawkish, sentimental, affected designs of Theseus and Pirithous and Æneas and Dido, pasted on foreign *salons à manger*, and the interior of country-houses. If our tastes are not epic, nor our pretensions lofty, they are simple and our own; and we may possibly enjoy our native rural sports and the rude remembrances of them, with the

well, because they fight as they box, not out of malice, but to show *pluck* and manhood. *Fair play and old England for ever!* This is the only bravery that will stand the test. There is the same determination and spirit shown in resistance as in attack; but not the same pleasure in getting a cut with a sabre as in giving one. There is, therefore, always a certain degree of effeminacy mixed up with any approach to cruelty, since both have their source in the same principle, viz., an over-valuing of pain.[1] This was the reason the French (having the best cause and the best general in the world) ran away at Waterloo, because they were inflamed, furious, drunk with the blood of their enemies, but when it came to their turn, wanting the same stimulus, they were panic-struck, and their hearts and their senses failed them all at once.

---

[1] Vanity is the same half-witted principle, compared with pride. It leaves men in the lurch when it is most needed; is mortified at being reduced to stand on the defensive, and relinquishes the field to its more surly antagonist.

truer relish on this account, that they are suited to us and we to them. The English nation, too, are naturally 'brothers of the angle.' This pursuit implies just that mixture of patience and pastime, of vacancy and thoughtfulness, of idleness and business, of pleasure and of pain, which is suited to the genius of an Englishman, and as I suspect, of no one else in the same degree. He is eminently gifted to stand in the situation assigned by Dr. Johnson to the angler, 'at one end of a rod with a worm at the other.' I should suppose no other language than ours can show such a book as an often-mentioned one, Walton's *Complete Angler*—so full of *naïveté*, of unaffected sprightliness, of busy trifling, of dainty songs, of refreshing brooks, of shady arbours, of happy thoughts and of the herb called *Heart's Ease!* Some persons can see neither the wit nor wisdom of this genuine volume, as if a book as well as a man might not have a personal character belonging to it, amiable, venerable from the spirit of joy and thorough goodness it manifests, independently of acute remarks or scientific discoveries; others object to the cruelty of Walton's theory and practice of trout-fishing—for my part, I should as soon charge an infant with cruelty for killing a fly, and I feel the same sort of pleasure in reading his book as I should have done in the company of this happy, childlike old man, watching his ruddy cheek, his laughing eye, the kindness of his heart, and the dexterity of his hand in seizing his finny prey! It must be confessed, there is often an odd sort of *materiality* in English sports and recreations. I have known several persons, whose existence consisted wholly in manual exercises, and all whose enjoyments lay at their finger-ends. Their greatest happiness was in cutting a stick, in mending a cabbage-net, in digging a hole in the ground, in hitting a mark, turning a lathe, or in something else of the same kind, at which they had a certain *knack*. Well is it when we can amuse ourselves with such trifles and without injury to others! This class of character, which the *Spectator* has immortalised in the

person of Will Wimble, is still common among younger brothers and retired gentlemen of small incomes in town or country. London is half suburbs. The suburbs of Paris are a desert, and you see nothing but crazy windmills, stone walls, and a few straggling visitants, in spots where in England you would find a thousand villas, a thousand terraces, crowned with their own delights, or be stunned with the noise of bowling-greens and tea-gardens, or stifled with the fumes of tobacco mingling with fragrant shrubs, or the clouds of dust raised by half the population of the metropolis panting and toiling in search of a mouthful of fresh air. The Parisian is, perhaps, as well (or better) contented with himself wherever he is, stewed in his shop or his garret; the Londoner is miserable in these circumstances, and glad to escape from them.[1] Let no one object to the gloomy appearance of a London Sunday, compared with a Parisian one. It is a part of our politics and our religion: we would not have James the First's *Book of Sports* thrust down our throats: and besides, it is a part of our character to do one thing at a time, and not to be dancing a jig and on our knees in the same breath. It is true the Englishman spends his Sunday evening at the ale-house—

> And e'en on Sunday
> He drinks with Kirton Jean till Monday—

but he only unbends and waxes mellow by degrees, and sits soaking till he can neither sit, stand, nor go: it is his vice, and a beastly one it is, but not a proof of any inherent distaste to mirth or good fellowship. Neither can foreigners throw the carnival in our teeth with any effect: those who have seen it (at Florence, for example), will say that it is duller than anything in England. Our Bartholomew Fair is Queen Mab herself to it! What can be duller than a parcel of masks moving about the streets and looking as grave and monotonous as possible from day to day, and with the

[1] The English are fond of change of scene; the French of change of posture; the Italians like to sit still, and do nothing.

same lifeless formality in their limbs and gestures as in their features? One might as well expect variety and spirit in a procession of wax-work figures. We must be hard run indeed, when we have recourse to a pasteboard proxy to set off our mirth: a mask may be a very good cover for licentiousness (though of that I saw no signs), but it is a very bad exponent of wit and humour. I should suppose there is more drollery and unction in the caricatures in Fore's shop-window, than in all the masks in Italy, without exception.[1]

The humour of English writing and description has often been wondered at; and it flows from the same source as the merry *traits* of our character. A degree of barbarism and rusticity seems necessary to the perfection of humour. The droll and laughable depend on peculiarity and incongruity of character. But with the progress of refinement, the peculiarities of individuals and of classes wear out or lose their sharp, abrupt edges; nay, a certain slowness and dulness of understanding is required to be struck with odd and unaccountable appearances, for which a greater facility of apprehension can sooner assign an explanation that breaks the force of the seeming absurdity, and to which a wider scope of imagination is more easily reconciled. Clowns and country people are more amused, are more disposed to laugh and make sport of the dress of strangers, because from their ignorance the surprise is greater, and they cannot conceive anything to be natural or proper to which they are unused. Without a given portion of hardness and repulsiveness of feeling the ludicrous cannot well exist. Wonder

[1] Bells are peculiar to England. They jangle them in Italy during the carnival as boys do with us at Shrovetide; but they have no notion of ringing them. The sound of village bells never cheers you in travelling, nor have you the lute or cittern in their stead. The expression of 'Merry Bells' is a favourite, and not one of the least appropriate in our language:

> For him the merry bells had rung, I ween,
> If in this nook of quiet bells had ever been.
>
> *Castle of Indolence.*[1]

[1] Canto i. st. 62.

and curiosity, the attributes of inexperience, enter greatly into its composition. Now it appears to me that the English are (or were) just at that mean point between intelligence and obtuseness, which must produce the most abundant and happiest crop of humour. Absurdity and singularity glide over the French mind without jarring or jostling with it; or they evaporate in levity: with the Italians they are lost in indolence or pleasure. The ludicrous takes hold of the English imagination, and clings to it with all its ramifications. We resent any difference or peculiarity of appearance at first, and yet, having not much malice at our hearts, we are glad to turn it into a jest—we are liable to be offended, and as willing to be pleased—struck with oddity from not knowing what to make of it, we wonder and burst out a laughing at the eccentricity of others, while we follow our own bent from wilfulness or simplicity, and thus afford them, in our turn, matter for the indulgence of the comic vein. It is possible that a greater refinement of manners may give birth to finer distinctions of satire and a nicer tact for the ridiculous: but our insular situation and character are, I should say, most likely to foster, as they have in fact fostered, the greatest quantity of natural and striking humour, in spite of our plodding tenaciousness, and want both of gaiety and quickness of perception. A set of raw recruits with their awkward movements and unbending joints are laughable enough; but they cease to be so, when they have once been drilled into discipline and uniformity. So it is with nations that lose their angular points and grotesque qualities with education and intercourse: but it is in a mixed state of manners that comic humour chiefly flourishes, for, in order that the drollery may not be lost, we must have spectators of the passing scene who are able to appreciate and embody its most remarkable features—wits as well as *butts* for ridicule. I shall mention two names in this department which may serve to redeem the national character from absolute dulness and solemn pretence—Fielding and Hogarth.

These were thorough specimens of true English humour; yet both were grave men. In reality, too high a pitch of animal spirits runs away with the imagination, instead of helping it to reach the goal; is inclined to take the jest for granted when it ought to work it out with patient and marked touches, and it ends in vapid flippancy and impertinence. Among our neighbours on the Continent, Molière and Rabelais carried the freedom of wit and humour to an almost incredible height; but they rather belonged to the old French school, and even approach and exceed the English licence and extravagance of conception. I do not consider Congreve's wit (though he belongs to us) as coming under the article here spoken of; for his genius is anything but *merry*. Lord Byron was in the habit of railing at the spirit of our good old comedy, and of abusing Shakspeare's Clowns and Fools, which he said the refinement of the French and Italian stage would not endure, and which only our grossness and puerile taste could tolerate. In this I agree with him; and it is *pat* to my purpose. I flatter myself that we are almost the only people who understand and relish *nonsense*. We are not 'merry and wise,' but indulge our mirth to excess and folly. When we trifle, we trifle in good earnest; and having once relaxed our hold of the helm, drift idly down the stream, and, delighted with the change, are tossed about 'by every little breath' of whim or caprice,

That under Heaven is blown.

All we then want is to proclaim a truce with reason, and to be pleased with as little expense of thought or pretension to wisdom as possible. This licensed fooling is carried to its very utmost length in Shakspeare, and in some other of our elder dramatists, without, perhaps, sufficient warrant or the same excuse. Nothing can justify this extreme relaxation but extreme tension. Shakspeare's trifling does indeed tread upon the very borders of vacancy: his meaning often hangs by the very slenderest threads. For this he

might be blamed if it did not take away our breath to follow his eagle flights, or if he did not at other times make the cordage of our hearts crack. After our heads ache with thinking, it is fair to play the fool. The clowns were as proper an appendage to the gravity of our antique literature, as fools and dwarfs were to the stately dignity of courts and noble houses in former days. Of all people, they have the best right to claim a total exemption from rules and rigid formality, who, when they have anything of importance to do, set about it with the greatest earnestness and perseverance, and are generally grave and sober to a proverb.[1] Swift, who wrote more idle or *nonsense* verses than any man, was the severest of moralists; and his feelings and observations morbidly acute. Did not Lord Byron himself follow up his *Childe Harold* with his *Don Juan?*—not that I insist on what he did as an illustration of the English character. He was one of the English Nobility, not one of the English people; and his occasional ease and familiarity were in my mind equally constrained and affected, whether in relation to the pretensions of his rank or the efforts of his genius.

They ask you in France, how you pass your time in England without amusements; and can with difficulty believe that there are theatres in London, still less that they are larger and handsomer than those in Paris. That we should have comic actors, 'they own surprises them.' They judge of the English character in the lump as one great jolter-head, containing all the stupidity of the country, as the large ball at the top of the Dispensary in Warwick Lane, from its resemblance to a gilded pill, has been made to represent the whole pharmacopœia and professional quackery of the kingdom. They have no more notion, for instance, how we should have such an actor as Liston on our stage, than if we were to tell them we have parts performed by a

[1] The strict formality of French serious writing is resorted to as a foil to the natural levity of their character.

sea-otter; nor, if they were to see him, would they be much the wiser, or know what to think of his unaccountable twitches of countenance or nondescript gestures, of his teeth chattering in his head, his eyes that seem dropping from their sockets, his nose that is tickled by a jest as by a feather, and shining with self-complacency as if oiled, his ignorant conceit, his gaping stupor, his lumpish vivacity in Lubin Log or Tony Lumpkin; for as our rivals do not wind up the machine to such a determined intensity of purpose, neither have they any idea of its running down to such degrees of imbecility and folly, or coming to an absolute *stand-still* and lack of meaning, nor can they enter into or be amused with the contrast. No people ever laugh heartily who can give a reason for their doing so: and I believe the English in general are not yet in this predicament. They are not metaphysical, but very much in a state of nature; and this is one main ground why I give them credit for being merry, notwithstanding appearances. Their mirth is not the mirth of vice or desperation, but of innocence and a native wildness. They do not cavil or boggle at niceties, or merely come to the edge of a joke, but break their necks over it with a wanton 'Here goes,' where others make a *pirouette* and stand upon decorum. The French cannot, however, be persuaded of the excellence of our comic stage, nor of the store we set by it. When they ask what amusements we have, it is plain they can never have heard of Mrs. Jordan, nor King, nor Bannister, nor Suett, nor Munden, nor Lewis, nor little Simmons, nor Dodd, and Parsons, and Emery, and Miss Pope, and Miss Farren, and all those who even in my time have gladdened a nation and 'made life's business like a summer's dream.' Can I think of them, and of their names that glittered in the play-bills when I was young, exciting all the flutter of hope and expectation of seeing them in their favourite parts of Nell, or Little Pickle, or Touchstone, or Sir Peter Teazle, or Lenitive in the *Prize*, or Lingo, or Crabtree, or Nipperkin, or old Dornton, or Ranger, or the Copper Captain, or Lord Sands, or Fitch, or Moses, or Sir Andrew

Aguecheek, or Acres, or Elbow, or Hodge, or Flora, or the Duenna, or Lady Teazle, or Lady Grace, or of the gaiety that sparkled in all eyes, and the delight that overflowed all hearts, as they glanced before us in these parts,

Throwing a gaudy shadow upon life—

and not feel my heart yearn within me, or couple the thoughts of England and the spleen together? Our cloud has at least its rainbow tints; ours is not one long polar night of cold and dulness, but we have the gleaming lights of fancy to amuse us, the household fires of truth and genius to warm us. We can go to a play and see Liston; or stay at home and read *Roderick Random*; or have Hogarth's prints of *Marriage à la Mode* hanging round our room. Tut! 'there's livers' even in England, as well as 'out of it.' We are not quite the *forlorn hope* of humanity, the last of nations. The French look at us across the Channel, and seeing nothing but water and a cloudy mist, think that this is England. If they have any farther idea of us, it is of George III. and our Jack tars, the House of Lords and House of Commons; and this is no great addition to us. To go beyond this, to talk of arts and elegances as having taken up their abode here, or to say that Mrs. Abington was equal to Mademoiselle Mars, and that we at one time got up the *School for Scandal*, as they do the *Misanthrope*, is to persuade them that Iceland is a pleasant winter retreat, or to recommend the whale-fishery as a classical amusement. The French are the *cockneys* of Europe, and have no idea how any one can exist out of Paris, or be alive without incessant grimace and *jabber*. Yet what imports it? What! though the joyous train I have just enumerated were, perhaps, never heard of in the precincts of the Palais-Royal, is it not enough that they gave pleasure where they were, to those who saw and heard them? Must our laugh, to be sincere, have its echo on the other side of the water? Had not the French their favourites and their enjoyments at the time, that we knew nothing of? Why then should we not have ours (and boast of them too)

without their leave? A monopoly of self-conceit is not a monopoly of all other advantages. The English, when they go abroad, do not take away the prejudice against them by their looks. We seem duller and sadder than we are. As I write this, I am sitting in the open air in a beautiful valley, near Vevy: Clarens is on my left, the Dent de Jamant is behind me, the rocks of Meillerie opposite: under my feet is a green bank, enamelled with white and purple flowers, in which a dewdrop here and there still glitters with pearly light—

And gaudy butterflies flutter around.

Intent upon the scene and upon the thoughts that stir within me, I conjure up the cheerful passages of my life, and a crowd of happy images appear before me. No one would see it in my looks—my eyes grow dull and fixed, and I seem rooted to the spot, as all this phantasmagoria passes in review before me, glancing a reflex lustre on the face of the world and nature. But the traces of pleasure, in my case, sink into an absorbent ground of thoughtful melancholy, and require to be brought out by time and circumstances, or (as the critics tell you) by the *varnish* of style!

The *comfort*, on which the English lay so much stress, is of the same character, and arises from the same source as their mirth. Both exist by contrast and a sort of contradiction. The English are certainly the most uncomfortable of all people in themselves, and therefore it is that they stand in need of every kind of comfort and accommodation. The least thing puts them out of their way, and therefore everything must be in its place. They are mightily offended at disagreeable tastes and smells, and therefore they exact the utmost neatness and nicety. They are sensible of heat and cold, and therefore they cannot exist, unless everything is snug and warm, or else open and airy, where they are. They must have 'all appliances and means to boot.' They are afraid of interruption and intrusion, and therefore they shut themselves up in indoor enjoyments and by their own firesides. It is not that they

require luxuries (for that implies a high degree of epicurean indulgence and gratification), but they cannot do without *their comforts*; that is, whatever tends to supply their physical wants, and ward off physical pain and annoyance. As they have not a fund of animal spirits and enjoyments in themselves, they cling to external objects for support, and derive solid satisfaction from the ideas of order, cleanliness, plenty, property, and domestic quiet, as they seek for diversion from odd accidents and grotesque surprises, and have the highest possible relish not of voluptuous softness, but of hard knocks and dry blows, as one means of ascertaining their personal identity.

ON A SUN-DIAL

To carve out dials quaintly, point by point.
SHAKSPEARE.

HORAS non numero nisi serenas—is the motto of a sun-dial near Venice. There is a softness and a harmony in the words and in the thought unparalleled. Of all conceits it is surely the most classical. 'I count only the hours that are serene.' What a bland and care-dispelling feeling! How the shadows seem to fade on the dial-plate as the sky lours, and time presents only a blank unless as its progress is marked by what is joyous, and all that is not happy sinks into oblivion! What a fine lesson is conveyed to the mind—to take no note of time but by its benefits, to watch only for the smiles and neglect the frowns of fate, to compose our lives of bright and gentle moments, turning always to the sunny side of things, and letting the rest slip from our imaginations, unheeded or forgotten! How different from the common art of self-tormenting! For myself, as I rode along the Brenta, while the sun shone hot upon its sluggish, slimy waves, my sensations were far from comfortable; but the reading this inscription on the side of a glaring wall in an instant restored me to myself; and still, whenever I think of or repeat it, it has the power of wafting me into the region of pure and blissful abstraction. I cannot help fancying it to be a legend of Popish superstition. Some monk of the dark ages must have invented and bequeathed it to us, who, loitering in trim gardens and watching the silent march of time, as his fruits ripened in the sun or his flowers

scented the balmy air, felt a mild languor pervade his senses, and having little to do or to care for, determined (in imitation of his sun-dial) to efface that little from his thoughts or draw a veil over it, making of his life one long dream of quiet! *Horas non numero nisi serenas* —he might repeat, when the heavens were overcast and the gathering storm scattered the falling leaves, and turn to his books and wrap himself in his golden studies! Out of some such mood of mind, indolent, elegant, thoughtful, this exquisite device (speaking volumes) must have originated.

Of the several modes of counting time, that by the sun-dial is perhaps the most apposite and striking, if not the most convenient or comprehensive. It does not obtrude its observations, though it 'morals on the time," and, by its stationary character, forms a contrast to the most fleeting of all essences. It stands *sub dio*—under the marble air, and there is some connection between the image of infinity and eternity. I should also like to have a sun-flower growing near it with bees fluttering round.[1] It should be of iron to denote duration, and have a dull, leaden look. I hate a sun-dial made of wood, which is rather calculated to show the variations of the seasons, than the progress of time, slow, silent, imperceptible, chequered with light and shade. If our hours were all serene, we might probably take almost as little note of them, as the dial does of those that are clouded. It is the shadow thrown across, that gives us warning of their flight. Otherwise, our impressions would take the same undistinguishable hue; we should scarce be conscious of our existence. Those who have had none of the cares of this life to harass and disturb them, have been obliged to have recourse to the hopes and fears of the next to vary the prospect before them. Most of the methods for measuring the lapse of time have, I believe, been the contrivance of monks and religious recluses,

[1] Is this a verbal fallacy? Or in the close, retired, sheltered scene which I have imagined to myself, is not the sun-flower a natural accompaniment of the sun-dial?

who, finding time hang heavy on their hands, were at some pains to see how they got rid of it. The hour-glass is, I suspect, an older invention; and it is certainly the most defective of all. Its creeping sands are not indeed an unapt emblem of the minute, countless portions of our existence; and the manner in which they gradually slide through the hollow glass and diminish in number till not a single one is left, also illustrates the way in which our years slip from us by stealth: but as a mechanical invention, it is rather a hindrance than a help, for it requires to have the time, of which it pretends to count the precious moments, taken up in attention to itself, and in seeing that when one end of the glass is empty, we turn it round, in order that it may go on again, or else all our labour is lost, and we must wait for some other mode of ascertaining the time before we can recover our reckoning and proceed as before. The philosopher in his cell, the cottager at her spinning-wheel must, however, find an invaluable acquisition in this 'companion of the lonely hour,' as it has been called,[1] which not only serves to tell how the time goes, but to fill up its vacancies. What a treasure must not the little box seem to hold, as if it were a sacred deposit of the very grains and fleeting sands of life! What a business, in lieu of other more important avocations, to see it out to the last sand, and then to renew the process again on the instant, that there may not be the least flaw or error in the account! What a strong sense must be brought home to the mind of the value and irrecoverable nature of the time that is fled; what a thrilling, incessant consciousness of the slippery tenure by which we hold what remains of it! Our very existence must seem crumbling to atoms, and running down (without a miraculous reprieve) to the last fragment. 'Dust to dust and ashes to ashes' is a text that might be fairly inscribed on an hour-glass: it is ordinarily associated with the scythe of

[1] Once more, companion of the lonely hour,
I'll turn thee up again.
Bloomfield's Poems—The Widow to her Hour-glass

Time and a Death's-head, as a *memento mori*; and has, no doubt, furnished many a tacit hint to the apprehensive and visionary enthusiast in favour of a resurrection to another life!

The French give a different turn to things, less *sombre* and less edifying. A common and also a very pleasing ornament to a clock, in Paris, is a figure of Time seated in a boat which Cupid is rowing along, with the motto, *L'Amour fait passer le Temps*—which the wits again have travestied into *Le Temps fait passer l'Amour*. All this is ingenious and well; but it wants sentiment. I like a people who have something that they love and something that they hate, and with whom everything is not alike a matter of indifference or *pour passer le temps*. The French attach no importance to anything, except for the moment; they are only thinking how they shall get rid of one sensation for another; all their ideas are *in transitu*. Everything is detached, nothing is accumulated. It would be a million of years before a Frenchman would think of the *Horas non numero nisi serenas*. Its impassioned repose and *ideal* voluptuousness are as far from their breasts as the poetry of that line in Shakspeare—'How sweet the moonlight sleeps upon this bank!'[1] They never arrive at the classical—or the romantic. They blow the bubbles of vanity, fashion, and pleasure; but they do not expand their perceptions into refinement, or strengthen them into solidity. Where there is nothing fine in the groundwork of the imagination, nothing fine in the superstructure can be produced. They are light, airy, fanciful (to give them their due)—but when they attempt to be serious (beyond mere good sense) they are either dull or extravagant. When the volatile salt has flown off, nothing but a *caput mortuum* remains. They have infinite crotchets and caprices with their clocks and watches, which seem made for anything but to tell the hour—gold repeaters, watches with metal covers, clocks with hands to count the seconds. There is no escaping from quackery and

[1] *Merchant of Venice*, v. 1.

impertinence, even in our attempts to calculate the waste of time. The years gallop fast enough for me, without remarking every moment as it flies; and further, I must say I dislike a watch (whether of French or English manufacture) that comes to me like a footpad with its face muffled, and does not present its clear, open aspect like a friend, and point with its finger to the time of day. All this opening and shutting of dull, heavy cases (under pretence that the glass lid is liable to be broken, or lets in the dust or air and obstructs the movements of the watch), is not to husband time, but to give trouble. It is mere pomposity and self-importance, like consulting a mysterious oracle that one carries about with one in one's pocket, instead of asking a common question of an acquaintance or companion. There are two clocks which strike the hour in the room where I am. This I do not like. In the first place, I do not want to be reminded twice how the time goes (it is like the second tap of a saucy servant at your door when perhaps you have no wish to get up): in the next place, it is starting a difference of opinion on the subject, and I am averse to every appearance of wrangling and disputation. Time moves on the same, whatever disparity there may be in our mode of keeping count of it, like true fame in spite of the cavils and contradictions of the critics. I am no friend to repeating watches. The only pleasant association I have with them is the account given by Rousseau of some French lady, who sat up reading the *New Eloise* when it first came out, and ordering her maid to sound the repeater, found it was too late to go to bed, and continued reading on till morning. Yet how different is the interest excited by this story from the account which Rousseau somewhere else gives of his sitting up with his father reading romances, when a boy, till they were startled by the swallows twittering in their nests at daybreak, and the father cried out, half angry and ashamed—'*Allons, mon fils; je suis plus enfant que toi!*' In general, I have heard repeating watches sounded in stage-coaches at night, when some

fellow-traveller suddenly awaking and wondering what was the hour, another has very deliberately taken out his watch, and pressing the spring, it has counted out the time; each petty stroke acting like a sharp puncture on the ear, and informing me of the dreary hours I had already passed, and of the more dreary ones I had to wait till morning.

The great advantage, it is true, which clocks have over watches and other dumb reckoners of time is, that for the most part they strike the hour—that they are as it were the mouth-pieces of time; that they not only point it to the eye, but impress it on the ear; that they 'lend it both an understanding and a tongue.' Time thus speaks to us in an audible and warning voice. Objects of sight are easily distinguished by the sense, and suggest useful reflections to the mind; sounds, from their intermittent nature, and perhaps other causes, appeal more to the imagination, and strike upon the heart. But to do this, they must be unexpected and involuntary—there must be no trick in the case—they should not be squeezed out with a finger and a thumb; there should be nothing optional, personal in their occurrence; they should be like stern, inflexible monitors, that nothing can prevent from discharging their duty. Surely, if there is anything with which we should not mix up our vanity and self-consequence, it is with Time, the most independent of all things. All the sublimity, all the superstition that hang upon this palpable mode of announcing its flight, are chiefly attached to this circumstance. Time would lose its abstracted character, if we kept it like a curiosity or a jack-in-a-box: its prophetic warnings would have no effect, if it obviously spoke only at our prompting like a paltry ventriloquism. The clock that tells the coming, dreaded hour—the castle bell, that 'with its brazen throat and iron tongue, sounds *one* unto the drowsy ear of night'—the curfew, 'swinging slow with sullen roar' o'er wizard stream or fountain, are like a voice from other worlds, big with unknown events. The last sound, which is still kept up as an

old custom in many parts of England, is a great favourite with me. I used to hear it when a boy. It tells a tale of other times. The days that are past, the generations that are gone, the tangled forest glades and hamlets brown of my native country, the woodman's art, the Norman warrior armed for the battle or in his festive hall, the conqueror's iron rule and peasant's lamp extinguished, all start up at the clamorous peal, and fill my mind with fear and wonder. I confess, nothing at present interests me but what has been—the recollection of the impressions of my early life, or events long past, of which only the dim traces remain in a mouldering ruin or half-obsolete custom. That *things should be that are now no more*, creates in my mind the most unfeigned astonishment. I cannot solve the mystery of the past, nor exhaust my pleasure in it. The years, the generations to come, are nothing to me. We care no more about the world in the year 2300 than we do about one of the planets. We might as well make a voyage to the moon as think of stealing a march upon Time with impunity. *De non apparentibus et non existentibus eadem est ratio.* Those who are to come after us and push us from the stage seem like upstarts and pretenders, that may be said to exist *in vacuo*, we know not upon what, except as they are blown up with vanity and self-conceit by their patrons among the moderns. But the ancients are t e and *bona fide* people, to whom we are bound by aggregate knowledge and filial ties, and in whom, seen by the mellow light of history, we feel our own existence doubled and our pride consoled, as we ruminate on the vestiges of the past. The public in general, however, do not carry this speculative indifference about the future to what is to happen to themselves, or to the part they are to act in the busy scene. For my own part, I do; and the only wish I can form, or that ever prompts the passing sigh, would be to live some of my years over again — they would be those in which I enjoyed and suffered most!

The ticking of a clock in the night has nothing very

interesting nor very alarming in it, though superstition has magnified it into an omen. In a state of vigilance or debility, it preys upon the spirits like the persecution of a teasing, pertinacious insect; and haunting the imagination after it has ceased in reality, is converted into the death-watch. Time is rendered vast by contemplating its minute portions thus repeatedly and painfully urged upon its attention, as the ocean in its immensity is composed of water-drops. A clock striking with a clear and silver sound is a great relief in such circumstances, breaks the spell, and resembles a sylph-like and friendly spirit in the room. Foreigners with all their tricks and contrivances upon clocks and time-pieces, are strangers to the sound of village bells, though perhaps a people that can dance may dispense with them. They impart a pensive, wayward pleasure to the mind, and are a kind of chronology of happy events, often serious in the retrospect—births, marriages, and so forth. Coleridge calls them 'the poor man's only music.' A village spire in England peeping from its cluster of trees, is always associated in imagination with this cheerful accompaniment, and may be expected to pour its joyous tidings on the gale. In Catholic countries, you are stunned with the everlasting tolling of bells to prayers or for the dead. In the Apennines, and other wild and mountainous districts of Italy, the little chapel-bell with its simple tinkling sound has a romantic and charming effect. The monks in former times appear to have taken a pride in the construction of bells as well as churches; and some of those of the great cathedrals abroad (as at Cologne and Rouen) may be fairly said to be hoarse with counting the flight of ages. The chimes in Holland are a nuisance. They dance in the hours and the quarters. They leave no respite to the imagination. Before one set has done ringing in your ears, another begins. You do not know whether the hours move or stand still, go backwards or forwards, so fantastical and perplexing are their accompaniments. Time is a more staid personage, and not so full of

gambols. It puts you in mind of a tune with variations, or of an embroidered dress. Surely, nothing is more simple than Time. His march is straightforward; but we should have leisure allowed us to look back upon the distance we have come, and not be counting his steps every moment. Time in Holland is a foolish old fellow with all the antics of a youth, who 'goes to church in a coranto, and lights his pipe in a cinque-pace.' The chimes with us, on the contrary, as they come in every three or four hours, are like stages in the journey of the day. They give a fillip to the lazy, creeping hours, and relieve the lassitude of country-places. At noon, their desultory, trivial song is diffused through the hamlet with the odour of rashers of bacon; at the close of day they send the toil-worn sleepers to their beds. Their discontinuance would be a great loss to the thinking or unthinking public. Mr. Wordsworth has painted their effect on the mind when he makes his friend Matthew, in a fit of inspired dotage,

> Sing those witty rhymes
> About the crazy old church-clock
> And the bewilder'd chimes.

The tolling of the bell for deaths and executions is a fearful summons, though, as it announces, not the advance of time but the approach of fate, it happily makes no part of our subject. Otherwise, the 'sound of the bell' for Macheath's execution in the *Beggars' Opera*, or for that of the Conspirators in *Venice Preserved*, with the roll of the drum at a soldier's funeral, and a digression to that of my Uncle Toby, as it is so finely described by Sterne, would furnish ample topics to descant upon. If I were a moralist, I might disapprove the ringing in the new and ringing out the old year.

> Why dance ye, mortals, o'er the grave of Time?

St. Paul's bell tolls only for the death of our English

kings, or a distinguished personage or two, with long intervals between.[1]

Those who have no artificial means of ascertaining the progress of time, are in general the most acute in discerning its immediate signs, and are most retentive of individual dates. The mechanical aids to knowledge are not sharpeners of the wits. The understanding of a savage is a kind of natural almanac, and more true in its prognostication of the future. In his mind's eye he sees what has happened or what is likely to happen to him, 'as in a map the voyager his course.' Those who read the times and seasons in the aspect of the heavens and the configuration of the stars, who count by moons and know when the sun rises and sets, are by no means ignorant of their own affairs or of the common concatenation of events. People in such situations have not their faculties distracted by any multiplicity of inquiries beyond what befalls themselves, and the outward appearances that mark the change. There is, therefore, a simplicity and clearness in the knowledge they possess, which often puzzles the more learned. I am sometimes surprised at a shepherd-boy by the road-side, who sees nothing but the earth and sky, asking me the time of day—he ought to know so much better than any one how far the sun is above the horizon. I suppose he wants to ask a question of a passenger, or to see if he has a watch. Robinson Crusoe lost his reckoning in the monotony of his life and that bewildering dream of solitude, and was fain to have recourse to the notches in a piece of wood. What a diary was his! And how time must have spread its circuit round him, vast and pathless as the ocean!

For myself, I have never had a watch nor any other mode of keeping time in my possession, nor ever wish to learn how time goes. It is a sign I have had little to do, few avocations, few engagements. When I am in a town, I can hear the clock; and when I am in the

[1] Rousseau has admirably described the effect of bells on the imagination in a passage in the *Confessions*, beginning, "*Le son des cloches m'a toujours singulièrement affecté*," etc.

country, I can listen to the silence. What I like best is to lie whole mornings on a sunny bank on Salisbury Plain, without any object before me, neither knowing nor caring how time passes, and thus 'with light-winged toys of feathered Idleness' to melt down hours to moments. Perhaps some such thoughts as I have here set down float before me like motes before my half-shut eyes, or some vivid image of the past by forcible contrast rushes by me—'Diana and her fawn, and all the glories of the antique world'; then I start away to prevent the iron from entering my soul, and let fall some tears into that stream of time which separates me farther and farther from all I once loved! At length I rouse myself from my reverie, and home to dinner, proud of killing time with thought, nay even without thinking. Somewhat of this idle humour I inherit from my father, though he had not the same freedom from *ennui*, for he was not a metaphysician; and there were stops and vacant intervals in his being which he did not know how to fill up. He used in these cases, and as an obvious resource, carefully to wind up his watch at night, and 'with lack-lustre eye' more than once in the course of the day look to see what o'clock it was. Yet he had nothing else in his character in common with the elder Mr. Shandy Were I to attempt a sketch of him, for my own or the reader's satisfaction, it would be after the following manner——But now I recollect I have done something of the kind once before, and were I to resume the subject here, some bat or owl of a critic, with spectacled gravity, might swear I had stolen the whole of this Essay from myself—or (what is worse) from him! so I had better let it go as it is.

ON PREJUDICE

PREJUDICE, in its ordinary and literal sense, is *prejudging* any question without having sufficiently examined it, and adhering to our opinion upon it through ignorance, malice, or perversity, in spite of every evidence to the contrary. The little that we know has a strong alloy of misgiving and uncertainty in it; the mass of things of which we have no means of judging, but of which we form a blind and confident opinion, as if we were thoroughly acquainted with them, is monstrous. Prejudice is the child of ignorance: for as our actual knowledge falls short of our desire to know, or curiosity and interest in the world about us, so must we be tempted to decide upon a greater number of things at a venture; and having no check from reason or inquiry, we shall grow more obstinate and bigoted in our conclusions, according as we have been rash and presumptuous. The absence of proof, instead of suspending our judgment, only gives us an opportunity of making things out according to our wishes and fancies; mere ignorance is a blank canvas, on which we lay what colours we please, and paint objects black or white, as angels or devils, magnify or diminish them at our option; and in the *vacuum* either of facts or arguments, the weight of prejudice and passion falls with double force, and bears down everything before it. If we enlarge the circle of our previous knowledge ever so little, we may meet with something to create doubt and difficulty; but as long as we remain confined to the cell of our native ignorance, while we know nothing

beyond the routine of sense and custom, we shall refer everything to that standard, or make it out as we would have it to be, like spoiled children who have never been from home, and expect to find nothing in the world that does not accord with their wishes and notions. It is evident that the fewer things we know, the more ready we shall be to pronounce upon and condemn, what is new and strange to us; that is, the less capable we shall be of varying our conceptions, and the more prone to mistake a part for the whole. What we do not understand the meaning of, must necessarily appear to us ridiculous and contemptible; and we do not stop to inquire, till we have been taught by repeated experiments and warnings of our own fallibility, whether the absurdity is in ourselves, or in the object of our dislike and scorn. The most ignorant people are rude and insolent, as the most barbarous are cruel and ferocious. All our knowledge at first lying in a narrow compass (crowded by local and physical causes), whatever does not conform to this shocks us as out of reason and nature. The less we look abroad, the more our ideas are introverted, and our habitual impressions, from being made up of a few particulars always repeated, grow together into a kind of concrete substance, which will not bear taking to pieces, and where the smallest deviation destroys the whole feeling. Thus, the difference of colour in a black man was thought to forfeit his title to belong to the species, till books of voyages and travels, and old Fuller's quaint expression of 'God's image carved in ebony,' have brought the two ideas into a forced union, and men of colour are no longer to be libelled with impunity. The word *republic* has a harsh and incongruous sound to ears bred under a constitutional monarchy; and we strove hard for many years to overturn the French republic, merely because we could not reconcile it to ourselves that such a thing should exist at all, notwithstanding the examples of Holland, Switzerland, and many others. This term has hardly yet performed quarantine: to the loyal and patriotic it has an ugly

taint in it, and is scarcely fit to be mentioned in good company. If, however, we are weaned by degrees from our prejudices against certain words that shock opinion, this is not the case with all: those that offend good manners grow more offensive with the progress of refinement and civilisation, so that no writer now dares venture upon expressions that unwittingly disfigure the pages of our elder writers, and in this respect, instead of becoming callous or indifferent, we appear to become more fastidious every day. There is then a real grossness which does not depend on familiarity or custom. This account of the concrete nature of prejudice, or of the manner in which our ideas by habit and the dearth of general information coalesce together into one indissoluble form, will show (what otherwise seems unaccountable) how such violent antipathies and animosities have been occasioned by the most ridiculous or trifling differences of opinion, or outward symbols of it; for by constant custom, and the want of reflection, the most insignificant of these was as inseparably bound up with the main principle as the most important, and to give up any part was to give up the whole essence and vital interests of religion, morals, and government. Hence we see all sects and parties mutually insist on their own technical distinctions as the essentials and fundamentals of religion and politics, and, for the slightest variation in any of these, unceremoniously attack their opponents as atheists and blasphemers, traitors and incendiaries.

In fact, these minor points are laid hold of in preference, as being more obvious and tangible, and as leaving more room for the exercise of prejudice and passion. Another thing that makes our prejudices rancorous and inveterate is, that as they are taken up without reason, they seem to be self-evident; and we thence conclude; that they not only are so to ourselves, but must be so to others, so that their differing from us is wilful, hypocritical, and malicious. The Inquisition never pretended to punish its victims for being heretics or infidels, but for avowing opinions which with their

eyes open they knew to be false. That is, the whole of the Catholic faith, 'that one entire and perfect chrysolite,' appeared to them so completely without flaw and blameless, that they could not conceive how any one else could imagine it to be otherwise, except from stubbornness and contumacy, and would rather admit (to avoid so improbable a suggestion) that men went to the stake for an opinion, not which they held, but counterfeited, and were content to be burnt alive for the pleasure of playing the hypocrite. Nor is it wonderful that there should be so much repugnance to admit the existence of a serious doubt in matters of such vital and eternal interest, and on which the whole fabric of the Church hinged, since the first doubt that was expressed on any single point drew all the rest after it; and the first person who started a conscientious scruple, and claimed the *trial by reason*, threw down, as if by a magic spell, the strongholds of bigotry and superstition, and transferred the determination of the issue from the blind tribunal of prejudice and implicit faith to a totally different ground, the fair and open field of argument and inquiry. On this ground a single champion is a match for thousands. The decision of the majority is not here enough: unanimity is absolutely necessary to infallibility; for the only secure plea on which such a preposterous pretension could be set up, is by taking it for granted that there can be no possible doubt entertained upon the subject, and by diverting men's minds from ever asking themselves the question of the truth of certain dogmas and mysteries, any more than whether *two and two make four*. Prejudice, in short, is egotism: we see a part, and substitute it for the whole; a thing strikes us casually and by halves, and we would have the universe stand proxy for our decision, in order to rivet it more firmly in our own belief; however insufficient or sinister the grounds of our opinions, we would persuade ourselves that they arise out of the strongest conviction, and are entitled to unqualified approbation; slaves of our own prejudices, caprice, ignorance, we would be lords of the

understandings and reason of others; and (strange infatuation!) taking up an opinion solely from our own narrow and partial point of view, without consulting the feelings of others, or the reason of things, we are still uneasy if all the world do not come into our way of thinking.

The most dangerous enemies to established opinions are those who, by always defending them, call attention to their weak sides. The priests and politicians, in former times, were therefore wise in preventing the first approaches of innovation and inquiry; in preserving inviolate the smallest link in the adamantine chain with which they had bound the souls and bodies of men; in closing up every avenue or pore through which a doubt could creep in. for they knew that through the slightest crevice floods of irreligion and heresy would rush like a tide. Hence the constant alarm at free discussion and inquiry: hence the clamour against innovation and reform: hence our dread and detestation of those who differ with us in opinion, for this at once puts us on the necessity of defending ourselves, or of owning ourselves weak or in the wrong, if we cannot; and converts that which was before a bed of roses, while we slept undisturbed upon it, into a cushion of thorns; and hence our natural tenaciousness of those points which are most vulnerable, and of which we have no proof to offer; for as reason fails us, we are more annoyed by the objections, and require to be soothed and supported by the concurrence of others. Bigotry and intolerance, which pass as synonymous, are, if rightly considered, a contradiction in terms; for if, in drawing up the articles of our creed, we are blindly bigoted to our impressions and views, utterly disregarding all others, why should we afterwards be so haunted and disturbed by the last, as to wish to exterminate every difference of sentiment with fire and sword? The difficulty is only solved by considering that unequal compound, the human mind, alternately swayed by individual biasses and abstract pretensions, and where reason so often panders to, or is made the puppet of the will. To show

at once the danger and extent of prejudice, it may be sufficient to observe that all our convictions, however arrived at, and whether founded on strict demonstration or the merest delusion, are crusted over with the same varnish of confidence and conceit, and afford the same firm footing both to our theories and practice; or if there be any difference, we are in general 'most ignorant of what we are most assured,' the strength of will and impatience of contradiction making up for the want of evidence. Mr. Burke says that we ought to 'cherish our prejudices, because they are prejudices'; but this view of the case will satisfy the demands of neither party, for prejudice is never easy unless it can pass itself off for reason, or abstract undeniable truth; and again, in the eye of reason, if all prejudices are to be equally regarded as such, then the prejudices of others are right, and ours must in their turn be wrong. The great stumbling block to candour and liberality is the difficulty of being fully possessed of the excellence of any opinion or pursuits of our own, without proportionably condemning whatever is opposed to it, nor can we admit the possibility that when our side of the shield is black, the other should be white. The largest part of our judgments is prompted by habit and passion; but because habit is like a second nature, and we necessarily approve what passion suggests, we will have it that they are founded entirely on reason and nature, and that all the world must be of the same opinion, unless they wilfully shut their eyes to the truth. Animals are free from prejudice, because they have no notion or care about anything beyond themselves, and have no wish to generalise or talk big on what does not concern them: man alone falls into absurdity and error by setting up a claim to superior wisdom and virtue, and to be a dictator and lawgiver to all around him, and on all things that he has the remotest conception of. If mere prejudice were dumb as well as deaf and blind, it would not so much signify; but as it is, each sect, age, country, profession, individual, is ready to prove that they are exclusively in the right,

and to go together by the ears for it. 'It [illegible] the earth with the vain stir.' It is the trick for each party to raise an outcry against prejudice; as by this they flatter themselves, and would have it supposed by others, that they are perfectly free from it, and have all the reason on their own side. It is easy indeed to call names, or to separate the word *prejudice* from the word *reason*; but not so easy to separate the two things. Reason seems a very positive and palpable thing to those who have no notion of it, but as expressing their own views and feelings; as prejudice is evidently a very gross and shocking absurdity (that no one can fall into who wishes to avoid it), as long as we continue to apply this term to the prejudices of other people. To suppose that we cannot make a mistake is the very way to run headlong into it, for if the distinction were so broad and glaring as our self-conceit and dogmatism lead us to imagine it is, we could never, but by design, mistake truth for falsehood. Those, however, who think they can *make a clear stage of it*, and frame a set of opinions on all subjects by an appeal to reason alone, and without the smallest intermixture of custom, imagination, or passion, know just as little of themselves as they do of human nature. The best way to prevent our running into the wildest excesses of prejudice and the most dangerous aberrations from reason is, not to represent the two things as having a great gulf between them, which it is impossible to pass without a violent effort, but to show that we are constantly (even when we think ourselves most secure) treading on the brink of a precipice; that custom, passion, imagination, insinuate themselves into and influence almost every judgment we pass or sentiment we indulge, and are a necessary help (as well as hindrance) to the human understanding; and that to attempt to refer every question to abstract truth and precise definition, without allowing for the frailty of prejudice, which is the unavoidable consequence of the frailty and imperfection of reason, would be to unravel the whole web and texture of human understanding and society. Such

daring anatomists of morals and philosophy think that the whole beauty of the mind consists in the skeleton: cut away, without remorse, all sentiment, fancy, taste, as superfluous excrescences; and in their own eager, unfeeling pursuit of scientific truth and elementary principles, they 'murder to dissect.'

It is a mistake, however, to suppose that all prejudices are false, though it is not an easy matter to distinguish between true and false prejudice. Prejudice is properly an opinion or feeling, not for which there is no reason, but of which we cannot render a satisfactory account on the spot. It is not always possible to assign a 'reason for the faith that is in us,' not even if we take time and summon up all our strength; but it does not therefore follow that our faith is hollow and unfounded. A false impression may be defined to be an effect without a cause, or without any adequate one; but the effect may remain and be true, though the cause is concealed or forgotten. The grounds of our opinions and tastes may be deep, and be scattered over a large surface; they may be various, remote and complicated; but the result will be sound and true, if they have existed at all, though we may not be able to analyse them into classes, or to recall the particular time, place, and circumstances of each individual case or branch of the evidence. The materials of thought and feeling, the body of facts and experience, are infinite, are constantly going on around us, and acting to produce an impression of good or evil, of assent or dissent to certain inferences; but to require that we should be prepared to retain the whole of this mass of experience in our memory, to resolve it into its component parts, and be able to quote chapter and verse for every conclusion we unavoidably draw from it, or else to discard the whole together as unworthy the attention of a rational being, is to betray an utter ignorance both of the limits and the several uses of the human capacity. The *feeling* of the truth of anything, or the soundness of the judgment formed upon it from

repeated, actual impressions, is one thing; the power of vindicating and enforcing it, by distinctly appealing to or explaining those impressions, is another. The most fluent talkers or most plausible reasoners are not always the justest thinkers.

To deny that we can, in a certain sense, know and be justified in believing anything of which we cannot give the complete demonstration, or the exact *why* and *how*, would only be to deny that the clown, the mechanic (and not even the greatest philosopher), can know the commonest thing; for in this new and dogmatical process of reasoning, the greatest philosopher can trace nothing *above*, nor proceed a single step without taking something for granted;[1] and it is well if he does not take more things for granted than the most vulgar and illiterate, and what he knows a great deal less about. A common mechanic can tell how to work an engine better than the mathematician who invented it. A peasant is able to foretell rain from the appearance of the clouds, because (time out of mind) he has seen that appearance followed by that consequence; and shall a pedant catechise him out of a conviction which he has found true in innumerable instances, because he does not understand the composition of the elements, or cannot put his notions into a logical shape? There may also be some collateral circumstance (as the time of day), as well as the appearance of the clouds, which he may forget to state in accounting for his prediction; though, as it has been a part of his familiar experience, it has naturally guided him in forming it, whether he was aware of it or not. This comes under the head of the well-known principle of the *association of ideas*; by which certain impressions, from frequent recurrence,

[1] Berkeley, in his *Minute Philosopher*, attacks Dr. Halley, who had objected to faith and mysteries in religion, on this score; and contends that the mathematician, no less than the theologian, is obliged to presume on certain *postulates*, or to resort, before he could establish a single theorem, to a formal definition of those undefinable and hypothetical existences, points, lines, and surfaces; and, according to the ingenious and learned Bishop of Cloyne, *solids* would fare no better than *superficials* in this war of words and captious contradiction.

coalesce and act in unision truly and mechanically—that is, without our being conscious of anything but the general and settled result. On this principle it has been well said, that 'there is nothing so true as habit'; but it is also blind: we feel and can produce a given effect from numberless repetitions of the same cause; but we neither inquire into the cause, nor advert to the mode. In learning any art or exercise, we are obliged to take lessons, to watch others, to proceed step by step, to attend to the details and means employed; but when we are masters of it, we take all this for granted, and do it without labour and without thought, by a kind of habitual instinct—that is, by the trains of our ideas and volitions having been directed uniformly, and at last flowing of themselves into the proper channel.

We never do anything well till we cease to think about the manner of doing it. This is the reason why it is so difficult for any but natives to speak a language correctly or idiomatically. They do not succeed in this from knowledge or reflection, but from inveterate custom, which is a cord that cannot be loosed. In fact, in all that we do, feel, or think, there is a leaven of *prejudice* (more or less extensive), viz. something implied, of which we do not know or have forgotten the grounds.

If I am required to prove the possibility, or demonstrate the mode of whatever I do before I attempt it, I can neither speak, walk, nor see; nor have the use of my hands, senses, or common understanding. I do not know what muscles I use in walking, nor what organs I employ in speech: those who do, cannot speak or walk better on that account; nor can they tell how these organs and muscles themselves act. Can I not discover that one object is near, and another at a distance, from the *eye* alone, or from continual impressions of sense and custom concurring to make the distinction, without going through a course of perspective and optics?—or am I not to be allowed an opinion on the subject, or to act upon it, without being accused of

being a very *prejudiced* and obstinate person? An artist knows that, to imitate an object in the horizon, he must use less colour; and the naturalist knows that this effect is produced by the intervention of a greater quantity of air: but a country fellow, who knows nothing of either circumstance, must not only be ignorant but a blockhead, if he could be persuaded that a hill ten miles off was close before him, only because he could not state the grounds of his opinion scientifically. Not only must we (if restricted to reason and philosophy) distrust the notices of sense, but we must also dismiss all that mass of knowledge and perception which falls under the head of *common sense* and *natural feeling*, which is made up of the strong and urgent, but undefined impressions of things upon us, and lies between the two extremes of absolute proof and the grossest ignorance. Many of these pass for instinctive principles and *innate ideas;* but there is nothing in them 'more than natural.'

Without the aid of prejudice and custom, I should not be able to find my way across the room; nor know how to conduct myself in any circumstances, nor what to feel in any relation of life. Reason may play the critic, and correct certain errors afterwards; but if we were to wait for its formal and absolute decisions in the shifting and multifarious combinations of human affairs, the world would stand still. Even men of science, after they have gone over the proofs a number of times, abridge the process, and *jump at a conclusion:* is it therefore false, because they have always found it to be true? Science after a certain time becomes presumption; and learning reposes in ignorance. It has been observed, that women have more *tact* and insight into character than men, that they find out a pedant, a pretender, a blockhead, sooner. The explanation is, that they trust more to the first impressions and natural indications of things, without troubling themselves with a learned theory of them; whereas men, affecting greater gravity, and thinking themselves bound to justify their opinions, are afraid to form any judgment at all, without

the formality of proofs and definitions, and blunt the edge of their understandings, lest they should commit some mistake. They stay for facts, till it is too late to pronounce on the characters. Women are naturally physiognomists, and men phrenologists. The first judge by sensations; the last by rules. Prejudice is so far then an involuntary and stubborn *association of ideas*, of which we cannot assign the distinct grounds and origin; and the answer to the question, 'How do we know whether the prejudice is true or false?' depends chiefly on that other, whether the first connection between our ideas has been real or imaginary. This again resolves into the inquiry—Whether the subject in dispute falls under the province of our own experience, feeling, and observation, or is referable to the head of authority, tradition, and fanciful conjecture? Our practical conclusions are in this respect generally right; our speculative opinions are just as likely to be wrong. What we derive from our personal acquaintance with things (however narrow in its scope or imperfectly digested), is, for the most part, built on a solid foundation—that of Nature; it is in trusting others (who give themselves out for guides and [illegible] we are *all abroad*, and at the mercy of quackery, impudence, and imposture. Any impression, however absurd, or however we may have imbibed it, by being repeated and indulged in, becomes an article of implicit and incorrigible belief. The point to consider is, how we have first taken it up, whether from ourselves or the arbitrary dictation of others. 'Thus shall we try the doctrines, whether they be of nature or of man.'

So far then from the charge lying against vulgar and illiterate prejudice as the bane of truth and common sense, the argument turns the other way; for the greatest, the most solemn, and mischievous absurdities that mankind have been the dupes of, they have imbibed from the dogmatism and vanity or hypocrisy of the self-styled wise and learned, who have imposed profitable fictions upon them for self-evident truths, and contrived to enlarge their power with their pretensions to

knowledge. Every boor sees that the sun shines above his head ; that 'the moon is made of green cheese,' is a fable that has been taught him. Defoe says, that there were a hundred thousand stout country-fellows in his time ready to fight to the death against popery, without knowing whether popery was a man or a horse. This, then, was a prejudice that they did not fill up of their own heads. All the great points that men have founded a claim to superiority, wisdom, and illumination upon, that they have embroiled the world with, and made matters of the last importance, are what one age and country differ diametrically with each other about, have been successively and justly exploded, and have been the levers of opinion and the grounds of contention, precisely because, as their expounders and believers are equally in the dark about them, they rest wholly on the fluctuations of will and passion, and as they can neither be proved nor disproved, admit of the fiercest opposition or the most bigoted faith. In what 'comes home to the business and bosoms of men,' there is less of this uncertainty and presumption ; and there, in the little world of our own knowledge and experience, we can hardly do better than attend to the 'still, small voice' of our own hearts and feelings, instead of being browbeat by the effrontery, or puzzled by the sneers and cavils of pedants and sophists, of whatever school or description.

If I take a prejudice against a person from his face, I shall very probably be in the right ; if I take a prejudice against a person from hearsay, I shall quite as probably be in the wrong. We have a prejudice in favour of certain books, but it is hardly without knowledge, if we have read them with delight over and over again. Fame itself is a prejudice, though a fine one. Natural affection is a prejudice : for though we have cause to love our nearest connections better than others, we have no reason to think them better than others. The error here is, when that which is properly a dictate of the heart passes out of its sphere, and becomes an overweening decision of the under-

standing. So in like manner of the love of country; and there is a prejudice in favour of virtue, genius, liberty, which (though it were possible) it would be a pity to destroy. The passions, such as avarice, ambition, love, etc., are prejudices, that is amply exaggerated views of certain objects, made up of habit and imagination beyond their real value; but if we ask what is the real value of any object, independently of its connection with the power of habit, or its affording natural scope for the imagination, we shall perhaps be puzzled for an answer. To reduce things to the scale of abstract reason would be to annihilate our interest in them, instead of raising our affections to a higher standard; and by striving to make man rational, we should leave him merely brutish.

Animals are without prejudice: they are not led away by authority or custom, but it is because they are gross, and incapable of being taught. It is, however, a mistake to imagine that only the vulgar and ignorant, who can give no account of their opinions, are the slaves of bigotry and prejudice; the noisiest declaimers, the most subtle casuists, and most irrefragable doctors, are as far removed from the character of true philosophers, while they strain and pervert all their powers to prove some unintelligible dogma, instilled into their minds by early education, interest, or self-importance; and if we say the peasant or artisan is a Mahometan because he is born in Turkey, or a papist because he is born in Italy, the mufti at Constantinople or the cardinal at Rome is so, for no better reason, in the midst of all his pride and learning. Mr. Hobbes used to say, that if he had read as much as others, he should have been as ignorant as they.

After all, most of our opinions are a mixture of reason and prejudice, experience and authority. We can only judge for ourselves in what concerns ourselves, and in things about us: and even there we must trust continually to established opinion and current report; in higher and more abstruse points

we must pin our faith still more on others. If we believe only what we know at first hand, without trusting to authority at all, we shall disbelieve a great many things that really exist; and the suspicious coxcomb is as void of judgment as the credulous fool. My habitual conviction of the existence of such a place as Rome is not strengthened by my having seen it; it might be almost said to be obscured and weakened, as the reality falls short of the imagination. I walk along the streets without fearing that the houses will fall on my head, though I have not examined their foundation; and I believe firmly in the Newtonian system, though I have never read the *Principia*. In the former case, I argue that if the houses were inclined to fall they would not wait for me; and in the latter, I acquiesce in what all who have studied the subject, and are capable of understanding it, agree in, having no reason to suspect the contrary. That *the earth turns round* is agreeable to my understanding, though it shocks my sense, which is however too weak to grapple with so vast a question.

SELF-LOVE AND BENEVOLENCE

A DIALOGUE

A. For my part, I think Helvetius has made it clear that self-love is at the bottom of all our actions, even of those which are apparently the most generous and disinterested.

B. I do not know what you mean by saying that Helvetius has made this clear, nor what you mean by self-love.

A. Why, was not he the first who explained to the world that in gratifying others, we gratify ourselves; that though the result may be different, the motive is really the same, and a selfish one; and that if we had not more pleasure in performing what are called friendly or virtuous actions than the contrary, they would never enter our thoughts?

B. Certainly he is no more entitled to this discovery (if it be one) than you are. Hobbes and Mandeville long before him asserted the same thing in the most explicit and unequivocal manner;[1] and Butler, in the Notes and Preface to his Sermons, had also long before answered it in the most satisfactory way.

[1] 'Il a manqué au plus grand philosophe qu'aient eu les Français, de vivre dans quelque solitude des Alpes, dans quelque sejour eloigné, et de lancer delà son livre dans Paris sans y venir jamais lui-même. Rousseau avait trop de sensibilite et trop peu de raison, Buffon trop d'hypocrisie a son jardin des plantes, Voltaire trop d'enfantillage dans la tête, pour pouvoir juger le principe d'Helvetius.'—*De l'Amour*, tom. 2, p. 230.

My friend Mr. Beyle here lays too much stress on a borrowed verbal fallacy.

A. Ay, indeed! pray how so?

B. By giving the *common-sense* answer to the question which I have just asked of you.

A. And what is that? I do not exactly comprehend.

B. Why, that self-love means, both in common and philosophical speech, the love *of* self.

A. To be sure, *there needs no ghost to tell us that.*

B. And yet, simple as it is, both you and many great philosophers seem to have overlooked it.

A. You are pleased to be obscure—unriddle for the sake of the vulgar.

B. Well then, Bishop Butler's statement in the volume I have mentioned——

A. May I ask, is it the author of the *Analogy* you speak of?

B. The same, but an entirely different and much more valuable work. His position is, that the arguments of the opposite party go to prove that in all our motives and actions it is the individual indeed who loves or is interested in *something*, but not in the smallest degree (which yet seems necessary to make out the full import of the compound 'sound significant,' *self-love*) that that something is *himself*. By self-love is surely implied not only that it is I who feel a certain passion, desire, good-will, and so forth, but that I feel this good-will towards myself—in other words, that I am both the person feeling the attachment, and the object of it. In short, the controversy between self-love and benevolence relates not to the person who loves, but to the person beloved—otherwise, it is flat and puerile nonsense. There must always be some one to feel the love, that's certain, or else there could be no love of one thing or another—so far there can be no question that it is a given individual who feels, thinks, and acts, in all possible cases of feeling, thinking, and acting—'there needs,' according to your own allusion, 'no ghost come from the grave to tell us that'—but whether the said individual in so doing always thinks *of*, feels *for*, and acts *with a view to himself*, that is a very important question,

and the only real one at issue; and the very statement of which, in a distinct and intelligible form, gives at once the proper and inevitable answer to it. Self-love, to mean anything, must have a double meaning, that is, must not merely signify love, but love defined and directed in a particular manner, having *self* for its object, reflecting and reacting upon *self*; but it is downright and intolerable trifling to persist that the love or concern which we feel for another still has self for its object, because it is we who feel it. The same sort of quibbling would lead to the conclusion that when I am thinking of any other person, I am notwithstanding thinking of myself, because it is *I* who have his image in my mind.

A. I cannot, I confess, see the connection.

B. I wish you would point out the distinction. Or let me ask you—Suppose you were to observe me looking frequently and earnestly at myself in the glass, would you not be inclined to laugh, and say that this was vanity?

A. I might be half-tempted to do so.

B. Well; and if you were to find me admiring a fine picture, or speaking in terms of high praise of the person or qualities of another, would you not set it down equally to an excess of coxcombry and self-conceit?

A. How, in the name of common sense, should I do so?

B. Nay, how should you do otherwise upon your own principles? For if sympathy with another is to be construed into self-love because it is I who feel it, surely, by the same rule, my admiration and praise of another must be resolved into self-praise and self-admiration, and I am the whole time delighted with myself, to wit, with my own thoughts and feelings, while I pretend to be delighted with another. Another's limbs are as much mine, who contemplate them, as his feelings.

A. Now, my good friend, you go too far: I can't think you serious.

B. Do I not tell you that I have a most grave Bishop (equal to a whole Bench) on my side?

A. What! is this illustration of the looking-glass and picture his? I thought it was in your own far-fetched manner.

B. And why far-fetched?

A. Because nobody can think of calling the praise of another self-conceit—the words have a different meaning in the language.

B. Nobody has thought of confounding them hitherto, and yet they sound to me as like as selfishness and generosity. If our vanity can be brought to admire others disinterestedly, I do not see but our good-nature may be taught to serve them as disinterestedly. Grant me but this, that self-love signifies not simply, 'I love,' but requires to have this further addition, 'I love *myself*,' understood in order to make sense or grammar of it; and I defy you to make one or the other of Helvetius's theory, if you will needs have it to be his. If, as Fielding says, all our passions are selfish merely because they are *ours*, then in hating another we must be said to hate ourselves, just as wisely as in loving another, we are said to be actuated by self-love. I have no patience with such foolery. I respect that fine old sturdy fellow Hobbes, or even the acute, pertinacious sophistry of Mandeville; but I do not like the flimsy, self-satisfied repetition of an absurdity, which with its originality has lost all its piquancy.

A. You have, I know, very little patience with others who differ from you, nor are you a very literal reporter of the arguments of those who happen to be on your side of the question. You were about to tell me the substance of Butler's answer to Helvetius's theory, if we can let the anachronism pass; and I have as yet only heard certain quaint and verbal distinctions of your own. I must still think that the most disinterested actions proceed from a selfish motive. A man feels distress at the sight of a beggar, and he parts with his money to remove this uneasiness. If

he did not feel this distress in his own mind, he would take no steps to relieve the other's wants.

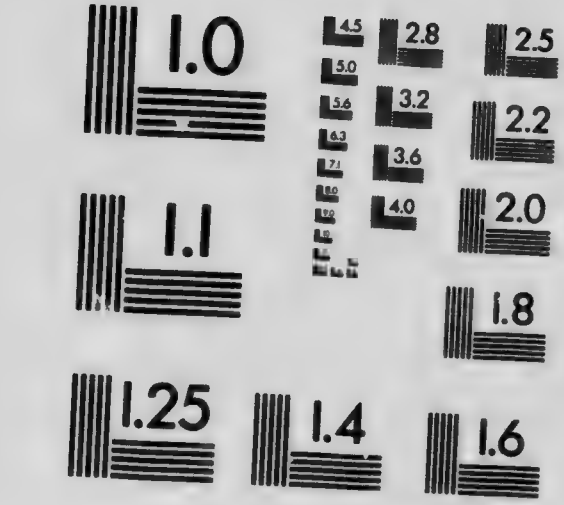
B. And pray, does he feel this distress in his own mind out of love to himself, or solely that he may have the pleasure of getting rid of it? The first *move* in the game of mutual obligation is evidently a social, not a selfish impulse; and I might rest the dispute here and insist upon going no farther till this step is got over, but it is not necessary. I have already told you the substance of Butler's answer to this commonplace and plausible objection. He says, in his fine broad, manly and yet unpretending mode of stating a question, that a living being may be supposed to be actuated either by mere sensations, having no reference to any one else, or else that having an idea and foresight of the consequences to others, he is influenced by and interested in those consequences only in so far as they have a distinct connection with his own ultimate good, in both which cases, seeing that the motives and actions have both their origin and end in self, they may and must be properly denominated *selfish*. But where the motive is neither physically nor morally selfish, that is, where the impulse to act is neither excited by a physical sensation nor by a reflection on the consequence to accrue to the individual, it must be hard to say in what sense it can be called so, except in that sense already exploded, namely, that which would infer that an impulse of any kind is selfish merely because it acts upon some one, or that before we can entertain disinterested sympathy with another, we must feel no sympathy at all. Benevolence, generosity, compassion, friendship, etc., imply, says the Bishop, that we take an immediate and unfeigned interest in the welfare of others; that their pleasures give us pleasure; that their pains give us pain, barely to know of them, and from no thought about ourselves. But no! retort the advocates of self-love, this is not enough: before any person can pretend to the title of benevolent, generous, and so on, he must prove, that so far from taking the deepest and most heartfelt





MICROCOPY RESOLUTION TEST CHART

(ANSI and ISO TEST CHART No. 2)



APPLIED IMAGE Inc

1653 East Main Street
Rochester, New York 14609 USA
(716) 482 - 0300 - Phone
(716) 288 - 5989 - Fax

interest in the happiness of others, he has no feeling on the subject, that he is perfectly indifferent to their weal or woe; and then taking infinite pains and making unaccountable sacrifices for their good without caring one farthing about them, he might pass for heroic and disinterested. But if he lets it appear he has the smallest good-will towards them, and acts upon it, he then becomes a merely selfish agent; so that to establish a character for generosity, compassion, humanity, etc., in any of his actions, he must first plainly prove that he never felt the slightest twinge of any of these passions thrilling in his bosom. This, according to my author, is requiring men to act not from charitable motives, but from no motives at all. Such reasoning has not an appearance of philosophy, but rather of drivelling weakness or of tacit irony. For my part, I can conceive of no higher strain of generosity than that which justly and truly says, *Nihil humani à me alienum puto*—but, according to your modern French friends and my old English ones, there is no difference between this and the most sordid selfishness; for the instant a man takes an interest in another's welfare, he makes it his own, and all the merit and disinterestedness is gone. 'Greater love than this hath no man, that he should give his life for his friend.' It must be rather a fanciful sort of self-love that at any time sacrifices its own acknowledged and obvious interests for the sake of another.

A. Not in the least. The expression you have just used explains the whole mystery, and I think you must allow this yourself. The moment I sympathise with another, I do in strictness make his interest my own. The two things on this supposition become inseparable, and my gratification is identified with his advantage. Every one, in short, consults his particular taste and inclination, whatever may be its bias, or acts from the strongest motive. Regulus, as Helvetius has so ably demonstrated, would not have returned to Carthage, but that the idea of dishonour gave him more uneasiness than the apprehension of a violent death.

B. That is, had he not preferred the honour of his country to his own interest. Surely, when self-love by all accounts takes so very wide a range and embraces entirely new objects, of a character so utterly opposed to its general circumscribed and paltry routine of action, it would be as well to designate it by some new and appropriate appellation, unless it were meant, by the intervention of the old and ambiguous term, to confound the important practical distinction which subsists between the puny circle of a man's physical sensations and private interests and the whole world of virtue and honour, and thus to bring back the last gradually and disingenuously within the verge of the former. Things without names are unapt to take root in the human mind: we are prone to reduce nature to the dimensions of language. If a feeling of a refined and romantic character is expressed by a gross and vulgar name, our habitual associations will be sure to degrade the first to the level of the last, instead of conforming to a forced and technical definition. But I beg to deny, not only that the objects in this case are the same, but that the principle is similar.

A. Do you then seriously pretend that the end of sympathy is not to get rid of the momentary uneasiness occasioned by the distress of another?

B. And has that uneasiness, I again ask, its source in self-love? If self-love were the only principle of action, we ought to receive no uneasiness from the pains of others, we ought to be wholly exempt from any such weakness: or the least that can be required to give the smallest shadow of excuse to this exclusive theory is, that the instant the pain was communicated by our foolish, indiscreet sympathy, we should think of nothing but getting rid of it as fast as possible, by fair means or foul, as a mechanical instinct. If the pain of sympathy, as soon as it arose, was decompounded from the objects which gave it birth, and acted upon the brain or nerves solely as a detached, desultory feeling, or abstracted sense of uneasiness, from which the mind shrunk with its natural aversion to pain, then I would

allow that the impulse in this case, having no reference to the good of another, and seeking only to remove a present inconvenience from the individual, would still be properly self-love: but no such process of abstraction takes place. The feeling of compassion as it first enters the mind, so it continues to act upon it in conjunction with the idea of what another suffers; refers every wish it forms, or every effort it makes, to the removal of pain from a fellow-creature, and is only satisfied when it believes this end to be accomplished. It is not a blind, physical repugnance to pain, as affecting ourselves, but a rational or intelligible conception of it as existing out of ourselves, that prompts and sustains our exertions in behalf of humanity. Nor can it be otherwise, while man is the creature of imagination and reason, and has faculties that implicate him (whether he will or not) in the pleasures and pains of others, and bind up his fate with theirs. Why, then, when an action or feeling is neither in its commencement nor progress, nor ultimate objects, dictated by or subject to the control of self-love, bestow the name where everything but the name is wanting?

A. I must give you fair warning, that in this last *tirade* you have more than once gone beyond my comprehension. Your distinctions are too fine-drawn, and there is a want of relief in the expression. Are you not getting back to what you describe as your *first manner?* Your present style is more amusing. See if you cannot throw a few high lights into that last argument!

B. Un peu plus à l'Anglaise—anything to oblige! I say, then, it appears to me strange that self-love should be asserted by any impartial reasoner (not the dupe of a play upon words), to be absolute and undisputed master of the human mind, when compassion or uneasiness on account of others enters it without leave and in spite of this principle. What! to be instantly expelled by it without mercy, so that it may still assert its pre-eminence? No; but to linger there,

to hold consultation with another principle, Imagination, which owes no allegiance to self-interest, and to march out only under condition and guarantee that the welfare of another is first provided for without any special clause in its own favour. This is much as if you were to say and swear, that though the bailiff and his man have taken possession of your house, you are still the rightful owner of it.

A. And so I am.

B. Why, then, not turn out such unwelcome intruders without standing upon ceremony?

A. You were too vague and abstracted before: now you are growing too figurative. Always in extremes.

B. Give me leave for a moment, as you will not let me spin mere metaphysical cobwebs.

A. I am patient.

B. Suppose that by sudden transformation your body were so contrived that it could feel the actual sensations of another body, as if your nerves had an immediate and physical communication; that you were assailed by a number of objects you saw and knew nothing of before, and felt desires and appetites springing up in your bosom for which you could not at all account—would you not say that this addition of another body made a material alteration in your former situation; that it called for a new set of precautions and instincts to provide for its wants and wishes? or would you persist in it that you were just where you were, that no change had taken place in your being and interests, and that your new body was in fact your old one, for no other reason than because it was yours? To my thinking the case would be quite altered by the supererogation of such a new sympathetic body, and I should be for dividing my care and time pretty equally between them.

Captain C. You mean that in that case you would have taken in partners to the concern, as well as No. I.?

B. Yes; and my concern for No. II. would be

something very distinct from and quite independent of, my original and hitherto exclusive concern for No. 1.

A. How very gross and vulgar! (whispering to D——, and then turning to me, added)—but why suppose an impossibility? I hate all such incongruous and far-fetched illustrations.

B. And yet this very miracle takes place every day in the human mind and heart, and you and your sophists would persuade us that it is nothing, and would slur over its existence by a shallow misnomer. Do I not by imaginary sympathy acquire a new interest (out of myself) in others, as much as I should on the former supposition by physical contact or animal magnetism? and am I not compelled by this new law of my nature (neither included in physical sensation nor a deliberate regard to my own individual welfare) to consult the feelings and wishes of the new social body of which I am become a member, often to the prejudice of my own? The parallel seems to me exact, and I think the inference from it unavoidable. I do not postpone a benevolent or friendly purpose to my own personal convenience or make it bend to it—

> Letting *I dare not* wait upon *I would*,
> Like the poor cat i' the adage.

The will is amenable, not to our immediate sensibility, but to reason and imagination, which point out and enforce a line of duty very different from that prescribed by self-love. The operation of sympathy or social feeling, though it has its seat certainly in the mind of the individual, is neither for his immediate behalf nor to his remote benefit, but is constantly a diversion from both, and therefore, I contend, is not in any sense selfish. The movements in my breast as much originate in, and are regulated by, the *idea* of what another feels, as if they were governed by a chord placed there vibrating to another's pain. If these movements were mechanical, they would be considered as directed to the good of another: it is

odd, that because my bosom takes part and beats in unison with them, they should become of a less generous character. In the passions of hatred, resentment, sullenness, or even in low spirits, we voluntarily go through a great deal of pain, because *such is our pleasure;* or strictly, because certain objects have taken hold of our imagination, and we cannot, or will not, get rid of the impression: why should good-nature and generosity be the only feelings in which we will not allow a little forgetfulness of ourselves? Once more. If self-love, or each individual's sensibility, sympathy, what you will, were like an animalcule, sensitive, quick, shrinking instantly from whatever gave it pain, seeking instinctively whatever gave it pleasure, and having no other obligation or law of its existence, then I should be most ready to acknowledge that this principle was in its nature, end, and origin, selfish, slippery, treacherous, inert, inoperative but as an instrument of some immediate stimulus, incapable of generous sacrifice or painful exertion, and deserving a name and title accordingly, leading one to bestow upon it its proper attributes. But the very reverse of all this happens. The mind is tenacious of remote purposes, indifferent to immediate feelings, which cannot consist with the nature of a rational and voluntary agent. Instead of the animalcule swimming in pleasure and gliding from pain, the principle of self-love is incessantly to the imagination or sense of duty what the fly is to the spider—that fixes its stings into it, involves it in its web, sucks its blood, and preys upon its vitals! Does the spider do all this to please the fly? Just as much as Regulus returned to Carthage, and was rolled down a hill in a barrel with iron spikes in it to please himself! The imagination or understanding is no less the enemy of our pleasure than of our interest. It will not let us be at ease till we have accomplished certain objects with which we have ourselves no concern but as melancholy truths.

A. But the spider you have so quaintly conjured up

is a different animal from the fly. The imagination on which you lay so much stress is a part of one's-self.

B. I grant it: and for that very reason, self-love, or a principle tending exclusively to our own immediate gratification or future advantage, neither is nor can be the sole spring of action in the human mind.

A. I cannot see that at all.

D. Nay, I think he has made it out better than usual.

B. Imagination is another name for an interest in things out of ourselves, which must naturally run counter to our own. Self-love, for so fine and smooth-spoken a gentleman, leads his friends into odd scrapes. The situation of Regulus in a barrel with iron spikes in it was not a very easy one: but, say the advocates of refined self-love, their points were a succession of agreeable punctures in his sides, compared with the stings of dishonour. But what bound him to this dreadful alternative? Not self-love. When the pursuit of honour becomes troublesome, 'throw honour to the dogs—I'll none of it!' This seems the true Epicurean solution. Philosophical self-love seems neither a voluptuary nor an effeminate coward, but a cynic, and even a martyr; so that I am afraid he will hardly dare show his face at Very's, and that, with this knowledge of his character, even the countenance of the Count Destutt de Tracy will not procure his admission to the saloons.

A. The Count Destutt de Tracy, did you say? Who is he? I never heard of him.

B. He is the author of the celebrated *Idéologie*, which Buonaparte denounced to the Chamber of Peers as the cause of his disasters in Russia. He is equally hated by the Bourbons; and, what is more extraordinary still, he is patronised by Ferdinand VII., who settled a pension of two hundred crowns a year on the translator of his works. He speaks of Condillac as having '*created* the science of Ideology,' and holds Helvetius for a true philosopher.

A. Which you do not! I think it a pity you should

affect singularity of opinion in such matters, when you have all the most sensible and best-informed judges against you.

B. I am sorry for it too; but I am afraid I can hardly expect you with me, till I have all Europe on my side, of which I see no chance while the Englishman, with his notions of solid beef and pudding, holds fast by his substantial identity, and the Frenchman, with his lighter food and air, mistakes every shadowy impulse for himself.

D. You deny, I think, that personal identity, in the qualified way in which you think proper to admit it, is any ground for the doctrine of self-interest?

B. Yes, in an exclusive and absolute sense, I do undoubtedly, that is, in the sense in which it is affirmed by metaphysicians, and ordinarily believed in.

D. Could you not go over the ground briefly, without entering into technicalities?

B. Not easily; but stop me when I entangle myself in difficulties. A person fancies, or feels habitually, that he has a positive, substantial interest in his own welfare (generally speaking), just as much as he has in any actual sensation that he feels, because he is always and necessarily the same self. What is his interest at one time is therefore equally *his* interest at all other times. This is taken for granted as a self-evident proposition. Say he does not feel a particular benefit or injury at this present moment, yet it is he who is to feel it, which comes to the same thing. Where there is this continued identity of person, there must also be a correspondent identity of interest. I have an abstract, unavoidable interest in whatever can befall myself, which I can have or feel in no other person living, because I am always, under every possible circumstance, the self-same individual, and not any other individual, whatsoever. In short, this word *self* (so closely do a number of associations cling round it and cement it together) is supposed to represent as it were a given concrete substance, as much one thing as anything in nature can possibly be, and the centre, or *substratum*

in which the different impressions and ramifications of my being meet and are indissolubly knit together.

A. And you propose, then, seriously to take 'this one entire and perfect chrysolite,' this self, this 'precious jewel of the soul,' this rock on which mankind have built their faith for ages, and at one blow shatter it to pieces with the sledge-hammer, or displace it from its hold in the imagination with the wrenching-irons of metaphysics?

B. I am willing to use my best endeavours for that purpose.

D. You really ought; for you have the prejudices of the whole world against you.

B. I grant the prejudices are formidable; and I should despair, did I not think my reasons even stronger. Besides, without altering the opinions of the whole world, I might be contented with the suffrages of one or two intelligent people.

D. Nay, you will prevail by flattery, if not by argument.

A. That is something newer than all the rest.

B. 'Plain truth,' dear A——, 'needs no flowers of speech.'

D. Let me rightly understand you. Do you mean to say that I am not C. D. and that you are not W. B., or that we shall not both of us remain so to the end of the chapter, without a possibility of ever changing places with each other?

B. I am afraid, if you go to that, there is very little chance that

I shall be ever mistaken for *you*.

But with all this precise individuality and inviolable identity that you speak of, let me ask, Are you not a little changed (less so, it is true, than most people) from what you were twenty years ago? Or do you expect to appear the same that you are now twenty years hence?

D. 'No more of that if thou lovest me.' We know what we are, but we know not what we shall be.

B. A truce, then; but be assured that, whenever

you happen to fling up your part, there will be no other person found to attempt it after you.

D. Pr , favour us with your paradox, without further preface.

B. I will try then to match my paradox against your prejudice, which, as it is armed all in proof, to make my impression on it I must, I suppose, take aim at the rivets; and if I can hit them, if I do not (round and smooth as it is) cut it into three pieces, and show that two parts in three are substance and the third and principal part shadow, never believe me again. Your real self ends exactly where your pretended self-interest begins; and in calculating upon this principle as a solid, permanent, absolute, self-evident truth, you are mocked with a name.

D. How so? I hear, but do not see.

B. You must allow that this identical, indivisible, ostensible self is at any rate distinguishable into three parts—the past, the present, and future?

D. I see no harm in that.

B. It is nearly all I ask. Well, then, I admit that you have a peculiar, emphatic, incommunicable, and exclusive interest or fellow-feeling in the two first of these selves; but I deny resolutely and unequivocally that you have any such natural, absolute, unavoidable, and mechanical interest in the last self, or in your future being, the interest you take in it being necessarily the offspring of understanding and imagination (aided by habit and circumstances), like that which you take in the welfare of others, and yet this last interest is the only one that is ever the object of rational and voluntary pursuit, or that ever comes into competition with the interests of others.

D. I am still to seek for the connecting clue.

B. I am almost ashamed to ask for your attention to a statement so very plain that it seems to border on a truism. I have an interest of a peculiar and limited nature in my present self, inasmuch as I feel my actual sensations not simply in a degree, but in a way and by means of faculties which afford me not the smallest

intimation of the sensations of others. I cannot possibly feel the sensations of any one else, nor consequently take the slightest interest in them as such. I have no nerves communicating with another's brain, and transmitting to me either the glow of pleasure or the agony of pain which he may feel at the present moment by means of his senses. So far, therefore, namely, so far as my present self or immediate sensations are concerned, I am cut off from all sympathy with others. I stand alone in the world, a perfectly insulated individual, necessarily and in the most unqualified sense indifferent to all that passes around me, and that does not in the first instance affect myself, for otherwise I neither have nor can have the remotest consciousness of it as a matter of organic sensation, any more than the mole has of light or the deaf adder of sounds.

D. Spoken like an oracle.

B. Again, I have a similar peculiar, mechanical, and untransferable interest in my past self, because I remember, and can dwell upon my past sensations (even after the objects are removed) also in a way and by means of faculties which do not give me the smallest insight into or sympathy with the past feelings of others. I may conjecture and fancy what those feelings have been; and so I do. But I have no *memory* or continued consciousness of what either of good or evil may have found a place in their bosoms, no secret spring that, being touched, vibrates to the hopes and wishes that are no more, unlocks the chambers of the past with the same assurance of reality, or identifies my feelings with theirs in the same intimate manner as with those which I have already felt in my own person. Here again, then, there is a real, undoubted, original and positive foundation for the notion of self to rest upon; for in relation to my former self and past feelings, I do possess a faculty which serves to unite me more especially to my own being, and at the same time draws a distinct and impassable line around that being, separating it from every other. A door of communication stands always open between my present consciousness and my past

feelings, which is locked and barred by the hand of Nature and the constitution of the human understanding against the intrusion of any straggling impressions from the minds of others. I can only see into their real history darkly and by reflection. To sympathise with their joys or sorrows, and place myself in their situation either now or formerly, I must proceed by guess-work, and borrow the use of the common faculty of imagination. I am ready to acknowledge, then, that in what regards the past as well as the present, there is a strict metaphysical distinction between myself and others, and that my personal identity so far, or in the close, continued, inseparable connection between my past and present impressions, is firmly and irrevocably established.

D. You go on swimmingly. So far all is sufficiently clear.

B. But now comes the rub: for beyond that point I deny that the doctrine of personal identity or self-interest (as a consequence from it) has any foundation to rest upon but a confusion of names and ideas. It has none in the nature of things or of the human mind. For I have no faculty by which I can project myself into the future, or hold the same sort of palpable, tangible, immediate, and exclusive communication with my future feelings in the same manner as I am made to feel the present moment by means of the senses, or the past moment by means of memory. If I have any such faculty, expressly set apart for the purpose, name it. If I have no such faculty, I can have no such interest. In order that I may possess a proper personal identity so as to live, breathe, and feel along the whole line of my existence in the same intense and intimate mode, it is absolutely necessary to have some general medium or faculty by which my successive impressions are blended and amalgamated together, and to maintain and support this extraordinary interest. But so far from there being any foundation for this merging and incorporating of my future in my present self, there is no link of connection, no sympathy, no

reaction, no mutual consciousness between them, nor even a possibility of anything of the kind, in a mechanical and personal sense. Up to the present point, the spot on which we stand, the doctrine of personal identity holds good; hitherto the proud and exclusive pretensions of self come, but no farther. The rest is air, is nothing, is a name, or but the common ground of reason and humanity. If I wish to pass beyond this point and look into my own future lot, or anticipate my future weal or woe before it has had an existence, I can do so by means of the same faculties by which I enter into and identify myself with the welfare, the being, and interests of others, but only by these. As I have already said, I have no particular organ or faculty of self-interest, in that case made and provided. I have no sensation of what is to happen to myself in future, no presentiment of it, no instinctive sympathy with it, nor consequently any abstract and unavoidable self-interest in it. Now mark: it is only in regard to my past and present being, that a broad and insurmountable barrier is placed between myself and others; as to future objects there is no absolute and fundamental distinction whatever. But it is only these last that are the objects of any rational or practical interest. The idea of self properly attaches to objects of sense or memory, but these can never be the objects of action or of voluntary pursuit, which must, by the supposition, have an eye to future events. But with respect to these the chain of self-interest is dissolved and falls in pieces by the very necessity of our nature, and our obligations to self as a blind, mechanical, unsociable principle are lost in the general law which binds us to the pursuit of good as it comes within our reach and knowledge.

A. A most lame and impotent conclusion, I must say. Do you mean to affirm that you have really the same interest in another's welfare that you have in your own?

B. I do not wish to assert anything without proof. Will you tell me, if you have this particular interest

in yourself, what faculty is it that gives it you—to what conjuration and mighty magic it is owing—or whether it is merely the name of self that is to be considered as a proof of all the absurdities and impossibilities that can be drawn from it?

A. I do not see that you have hitherto pointed out any.

B. What! not the impossibility that you should be another being, with whom you have not a particle of fellow-feeling?

A. Another being! Yes, I know it is always impossible for me to be another being.

B. Ay, or yourself either, without such a fellow-feeling, for it is that which constitutes self. If not, explain to me what you mean by self. But it is more convenient for you to let that magical sound lie involved in the obscurity of prejudice and language. You will please to take notice that it is not I who commence these hairbreadth distinctions and special pleading. I take the old ground of common sense and natural feeling, and maintain that though in a popular, practical sense mankind are strongly swayed by self-interest, yet in the same ordinary sense they are also governed by motives of good-nature, compassion, friendship, virtue, honour, etc. Now all this is denied by your modern metaphysicians, who would reduce everything to abstract self-interest, and exclude every other mixed motive or social tie in a strict philosophical sense. They would drive me from my ground by scholastic subtleties and new-fangled phrases; am I to blame, then, if I take them at their word, and try to foil them at their own weapons? Either stick to the unpretending *jog-trot* notions on the subject, or if you are determined to refine in analysing words and arguments, do not be angry if I follow the example set me, or even go a little farther to arrive at the truth. Shall we proceed on this understanding?

A. As you please.

B. We have got so far, then (if I mistake not, and if there is not some flaw in the argument which I am unable to detect), that the past and present (which

alone can appeal to our selfish faculties) are not the objects of action, and that the future (which can alone be the object of practical pursuit) has no particular claim or hold upon self. All action, all passion, all morality and self-interest, is prospective.

A. You have not made that point quite clear. What, then, is meant by a present interest, by the gratification of the present moment, as opposed to a future one?

B. Nothing, in a strict sense; or rather, in common speech, you mean a near one, the interest of the next moment, the next hour, the next day, the next year, as it happens.

A. What! would you have me believe that I snatch my hand out of the flame of a candle from a calculation of future consequences?

D. (*laughing.*) A. had better not meddle with that question. B. is in his element there. It is his old and favourite illustration.

B. Do you not snatch your hand out of the fire to procure ease from pain?

A. No doubt, I do.

B. And is not this ease subsequent to the act, and the act itself to the feeling of pain, which caused it?

A. It may be so; but the interval is so slight that we are not sensible of it.

B. Nature is nicer in her distinctions than we. Thus you could not lift the food to your mouth, but upon the same principle. The viands are indeed tempting, but if it were the sight or smell of these alone that attracted you, you would remain satisfied with them. But you use means to ends, neither of which exist till you employ or produce them, and which would never exist if the understanding which foresees them did not run on before the actual objects and purvey to appetite. If you say it is habit, it is partly so; but that habit would never have been formed were it not for the connection between cause and effect, which always takes place in the order of time, or of what Hume calls *antecedents* and *consequents*.

A. I confess I think this a mighty microscopic way of looking at the subject.

B. Yet you object equally to more vague and sweeping generalities. Let me, however, endeavour to draw the knot a little tighter, as it has a considerable weight to bear—no less, in my opinion, than the whole world of moral sentiments. All voluntary action must relate to the future: but the future can only exist or influence the mind as an object of imagination and forethought; therefore the motive to voluntary action, to all that we seek or shun, must be in all cases *ideal* and problematical. The thing itself which is an object of pursuit can never coexist with the motives which make it an object of pursuit. No one will say that the past can be an object either of prevention or pursuit. It may be a subject of involuntary regrets, or may give rise to the starts and flaws of passion; but we cannot set about seriously recalling or altering it. Neither can that which at present exists, or is an object of sensation, be at the same time an object of action or of volition, since if it *is*, no volition or exertion of mine can for the instant make it to be other than it is. I can make it *cease* to be, indeed, but this relates to the future, to the supposed non-existence of the object, and not to its actual impression on me. For a thing to be *willed*, it must necessarily not be. Over my past and present impressions my will has no control: they are placed, according to the poet, beyond the reach of fate, much more of human means. In order that I may take an effectual and consistent interest in anything, that it may be an object of hope or fear, of desire or dread, it must be a thing still to come, a thing still in doubt, depending on circumstances and the means used to bring about or avert it. It is my will that determines its existence or the contrary (otherwise there would be no use in troubling one's self about it); it does not itself lay its peremptory, inexorable mandates on my will. For it is as yet (and must be in order to be the rational object of a moment's deliberation) a non-entity, a possibility

merely, and it is plain that nothing can be the cause of nothing. That which is not, cannot act, much less can it act mechanically, physically, all-powerfully. So far is it from being true that a real and practical interest in anything are convertible terms, that a practical interest can never by any possible chance be a real one, that is, excited by the presence of a real object or by mechanical sympathy. I cannot assuredly be induced by a present object to take means to make it exist—it can be no more than present to me—or if it is past, it is too late to think of recovering the occasion or preventing it now. But the future, the future is all our own; or rather it belongs equally to others. The world of action, then, of business or pleasure, of self-love or benevolence, is not made up of solid materials, moved by downright, solid springs; it is essentially a void, an unreal mockery, both in regard to ourselves and others, except as it is filled up, animated, and set in motion by human thoughts and purposes. The ingredients of passion, action, and properly of interest are never positive, palpable matters-of-fact, concrete existences, but symbolical representations of events lodged in the bosom of futurity, and teaching us, by timely anticipation and watchful zeal, to build up the fabric of our own or others' future weal.

A. Do we not sometimes plot their woe with at least equal good-will?

B. Not much oftener than we are accessory to our own.

A. I must say that savours more to me of an antithesis than of an answer.

B. For once, be it so.

A. But surely there is a difference between a real and an imaginary interest? A history is not a romance.

B. Yes; but in this sense the feelings and interests of others are in the end as real, as such matters of fact as mine or yours can be. The history of the world is not a romance, though you and I have had only a small share in it. You would turn everything into auto-

biography. The interests of others are no more chimerical, visionary, fantastic, than my own, being founded in truth, and both are brought home to my bosom in the same way by force of imagination and sympathy.

D. But in addition to all this sympathy that you make such a rout about, it is *I* who am to feel a real, downright interest in my own future good, and I shall feel no such interest in another person's. Does not this make a wide, nay a total difference in the case? Am I to have no more affection for my own flesh and blood than for another's?

B. This would indeed make an entire difference in the case, if your interest in your own good were founded in your affection for yourself, and not your affection for yourself in your attachment to your own good. If you were attached to your own good merely because it was *yours*, I do not see why you should not be equally attached to your own ill—both are equally yours! Your own person or that of others would, I take it, be alike indifferent to you, but for the degree of sympathy you have with the feelings of either. Take away the sense or apprehension of pleasure or pain, and you would care no more about yourself than you do about the hair of your head or the paring of your nails, the parting with which gives you no sensible uneasiness at the time or on after-reflection.

D. But up to the present moment you allow that I have a particular interest in my proper self. Where, then, am I to stop, or how draw the line between my real and my imaginary identity?

B. The line is drawn for you by the nature of things. Or if the difference between reality and imagination is so small that you cannot perceive it, it only shows the strength of the latter. Certain it is that we can no more anticipate our future being than we can change places with another individual, except in an *ideal* and figurative sense. But it is just as impossible that I should have an actual sensation of and interest in my future feelings as that I should have an actual sensa-

tion of and interest in what another feels at the present instant. An essential and irreconcileable difference in our primary faculties forbids it. The future, were it the next moment, were it an object nearest and dearest to our hearts, is a dull blank, opaque, impervious to sense as an object close to the eye of the blind, did not the ray of reason and reflection enlighten it. We can never say to its fleeting, painted essence, 'Come, let me clutch thee!' it is a thing of air, a phantom that flies before us, and we follow it, and with respect to all but our past and present sensations, which are no longer anything to action, we totter on the brink of nothing. That self which we project before us into it, that we make our proxy or representative, and empower to embody, and transmit back to us all our real, substantial interests before they have had an existence, except in our imaginations, is but a shadow of ourselves, a bundle of habits, passions, and prejudices, a body that falls in pieces at the touch of reason or the approach of inquiry. It is true, we do build up such an imaginary self, and a proportionable interest in it; we clothe it with the associations of the past and present, we disguise it in the drapery of language, we add to it the strength of passion and the warmth of affection, till we at length come to class our whole existence under one head, and fancy our future history a solid, permanent, and actual continuation of our immediate being; but all this only proves the force of imagination and habit to build up such a structure on a merely partial foundation, and does not alter the true nature and distinction of things. On the same foundation are built up nearly as high natural affection, friendship, the love of country, of religion, etc. But of this presently. What shows that the doctrine of self-interest, however high it may rear its head, or however impregnable it may seem to attack, is a mere contradiction,

> In terms a fallacy, in fact a fiction,

is this single consideration, that we never know what

is to happen to us beforehand—no, not even for a moment—and that we cannot so much as tell whether we shall be alive a year, a month, or a day hence. We have no presentiment of what awaits us, making us feel the future in the instant. Indeed such an insight into futurity would be inconsistent with itself, or we must become mere passive instruments in the hands of fate. A house may fall on my head as I go from this, I may be crushed to pieces by a carriage running over me, or I may receive a piece of news that is death to my hopes, before another four-and-twenty hours are passed over, and yet I feel nothing of the blow that is thus to stagger and stun me. I laugh and am well. I have no warning given me either of the course or the consequence (in truth, if I had, I should, if possible, avoid it). This continued self-interest that watches over all my concerns alike, past, present, and future, and concentrates them all in one powerful and invariable principle of action, is useless here, leaves me at a loss at my greatest need, is torpid, silent, dead, and I have no more consciousness of what so nearly affects me, and no more care about it (till I find out my danger by other and natural means), than if no such thing were ever to happen, or were to happen to the Man in the Moon. It has been said that

> Coming events cast their shadows before;

but this beautiful line is not verified in the ordinary prose of life. That it is not, is a staggering consideration for your fine practical, instinctive, abstracted, comprehensive, uniform principle of self-interest. Don't you think so, D——?

D. I shall not answer you. Am I to give up my existence for an idle sophism? You heap riddle upon riddle; but I am mystery-proof. I still feel my personal identity as I do the chair I sit on, though I am enveloped in a cloud of smoke and words. Let me have your answer to a plain question.—Suppose I were actually to see a coach coming along, and I was in danger of being run over, what I want to know, is,

should I not try to save myself sooner than any other person?

B. No, you would first try to save a sister, if she were with you.

A. Surely that would be a very curious instance of *self*, though I do not deny it.

B. I do not think so. I believe there is hardly any one who does not prefer some one to themselves. For example, let us look into *Waverley*.

A. Ay, that is the way that you take your ideas of philosophy, from novels and romances, as if they were sound evidence.

B. If my conclusions are as true to nature as my premises, I shall be satisfied. Here is the passage I was going to quote: 'I was only ganging to say, my lord,' said Evan, in what he meant to be an insinuating manner, 'that if your excellent honour and the honourable court would let Vich Ian Vohr go free just this once, and let him gae back to France and not trouble King George's government again, that any six o' the very best of his clan will be willing to be justified in his stead; and if you'll just let me gae down to Glennaquoich, I'll fetch them up to ye myself to head or hang, and you may begin with me the very first man.'[1]

A. But such instances as this are the effect of habit and strong prejudice. We can hardly argue from so barbarous a state of society.

B. Excuse me there. I contend that our preference of ourselves is just as much the effect of habit, and very frequently a more unaccountable and unreasonable one than any other.

A. I should like to hear how you can possibly make that out.

B. If you will not condemn me before you hear what I have to say, I will try. You allow that D——, in the case we have been talking of, would perhaps run a little risk for you or me; but if it were a perfect stranger, he would get out of the way as fast as his legs would

[1] *Waverley*, vol. iii. p. 201.

carry him, and leave the stranger to shift for himself.

A. Yes; and does not that overturn your whole theory?

B. It would if my theory were as devoid of common sense as you are pleased to suppose; that is, if because I deny an original and absolute distinction in nature (where there is no such thing), it followed that I must deny that circumstances, intimacy, habit, knowledge, or a variety of incidental causes could have any influence on our affections and actions. My inference is just the contrary. For would you not say that D—— cared little about the stranger, for this plain reason, that he knew nothing about him?

A. No doubt.

B. And he would care rather more about you and me, because he knows more about us?

A. Why yes, it would seem so.

B. And he would care still more about a sister (according to the same supposition), because he would be still better acquainted with her, and had been more constantly with her?

A. I will not deny it.

B. And it is on the same principle (generally speaking) that a man cares most of all about himself, because he knows more about himself than about anybody else, that he is more in the secret of his own most intimate thoughts and feelings, and more in the habit of providing for his own wants and wishes, which he can anticipate with greater liveliness and certainty than those of others, from being more nearly 'made and moulded of things past.' The poetical fiction is rendered easier, and assisted by my acquaintance with myself, just as it is by the ties of kindred or habits of friendly intercourse. There is no farther approach made to the doctrines of self-love and personal identity.

D. E——, here is B—— trying to persuade me I am not myself.

E. Sometimes you are not.

D. But he says that I never am. Or is it only that I am not to be so?

B. Nay, I hope 'thou art to continue, thou naughty varlet'—

Here and hereafter, if the last may be?

You have been yourself (nobody like you) for the last forty years of your life: you would not prematurely stuff the next twenty into the account, till you have had them fairly out?

D. Not for the world, I have too great an affection for them.

B. Yet I think you would have less if you did not look forward to pass them among old books, old friends, old haunts. If you were cut off from all these, you would be less anxious about what was left of yourself.

D. I would rather be the Wandering Jew than not be at all.

B. Or you would not be the person I always took you for.

D. Does not this willingness to be the Wandering Jew, rather than nobody, seem to indicate that there is an abstract attachment to self, to the bare idea of existence, independently of circumstances or habit.

B. It must be a very loose and straggling one. You mix up some of your old recollections and favourite notions with your self-elect, and indulge them in your new character, or you would trouble yourself very little about it. If you do not come in in some shape or other, it is merely saying that you would be sorry if the Wandering Jew were to disappear from the earth, however strictly he may have hitherto maintained his *incognito*.

D. There is something in that; and as well as I remember, there is a curious but exceedingly mystical illustration of this point in an original Essay of yours which I have read and spoken to you about.

B. I believe there is; but A—— is tired of making objections, and I of answering them to no purpose.

D. I have the book in the closet, and if you like, we will turn to the place. It is after that burst of enthusiastic recollection (the only one in the book) that

Southey said at the time was something between the manner of Milton's prose works and Jeremy Taylor.

B. Ah! I as little thought then that I should ever be set down as a florid prose writer, as that he would become poet laureate!

J. D. here took the volume from his brother, and read the following passage from it.

'I do not think I should illustrate the foregoing reasoning so well by anything I could add on the subject, as by relating the manner in which it first struck me. There are moments in the life of a solitary thinker which are to him what the evening of some great victory is to the conqueror and hero—milder triumphs, long remembered with truer and deeper delight. And though the shouts of multitudes do not hail his success—though gay trophies, though the sounds of music, the glittering of armour, and the neighing of steeds do not mingle with his joy, yet shall he not want monuments and witnesses of his glory—the deep forest, the willowy brook, the gathering clouds of winter, or the silent gloom of his own chamber, 'faithful remembrancers of his high endeavour, and his glad success,' that, as time passes by him with unreturning wing, still awaken the consciousness of a spirit patient, indefatigable in the search of truth, and the hope of surviving in the thoughts and minds of other men. I remember I had been reading a speech which Mirabaud (the author of the *System of Nature*) has put into the mouth of a supposed atheist at the Last Judgment; and was afterwards led on by some means or other to consider the question, whether it could properly be said to be an act of virtue in any one to sacrifice his own final happiness to that of any other person or number of persons, if it were possible for the one ever to be made the price of the other? Suppose it were my own case—that it were in my power to save twenty other persons by voluntarily consenting to suffer for them: Why should I not do a generous thing, and never

trouble myself about what might be the consequence to myself the Lord knows when?

'The reason why a man should prefer his own future welfare to that of others is, that he has a necessary, absolute interest in the one, which he cannot have in the other—and this, again, is a consequence of his being always the same individual, of his continued identity with himself. The difference, I thought, was this, that however insensible I may be to my own interest at any future period, yet when the time comes I shall feel differently about it. I shall then judge of it from the actual impression of the object, that is, truly and certainly; and as I shall still be conscious of my past feelings, and shall bitterly regret my own folly and insensibility, I ought, as a rational agent, to be determined now by what I shall then wish I had done, when I shall feel the consequences of my actions most deeply and sensibly. It is this continued consciousness of my own feelings which gives me an immediate interest in whatever relates to my future welfare, and makes me at all times accountable to myself for my own conduct. As, therefore, this consciousness will be renewed in me after death, if I exist again at all—But stop—as I must be conscious of my past feelings to be myself, and as this conscious being will be myself, how if that consciousness should be transferred to some other being? How am I to know that I am not imposed upon by a false claim of identity? But that is ridiculous, because you will have no other self than that which arises from this very consciousness. Why, then, this self may be multiplied in as many different beings as the Deity may think proper to endue with the same consciousness; which, if it can be renewed at will in any one instance, may clearly be so in a hundred others. Am I to regard all these as equally myself? Am I equally interested in the fate of all? Or if I must fix upon some one of them in particular as my representative and other self, how am I to be determined in my choice? Here, then, I saw an end put to my speculations about absolute self-interest and

personal identity. I saw plainly that the consciousness of my own feelings, which is made the foundation of my continued interest in them, could not extend to what had never been, and might never be; that my identity with myself must be confined to the connection between my past and present being; that with respect to my future feelings or interests, they could have no communication with, or influence over, my present feelings and interests, merely because they were future; that I shall be hereafter affected by the recollection of my past feelings and action; and my remorse be equally heightened by reflecting on my past folly and late-earned wisdom, whether I am really the same being, or have only the same consciousness renewed in me; but that to suppose that this remorse can react in the reverse order on my present feelings, or give me an immediate interest in my future feelings, before they exist, is an express contradiction in terms. It can only affect me as an imaginary idea, or an idea of truth. But so may the interests of others; and the question proposed was, whether I have not some real, necessary, absolute interest in whatever relates to my future being, in consequence of my immediate connection with myself—independently of the general impression which all positive ideas have on my mind. How, then, can this pretended unity of consciousness which is only reflected from the past—which makes me so little acquainted with the future that I cannot even tell for a moment how long it will be continued, whether it will be entirely interrupted by or renewed in me after death, and which might be multiplied in I don't know how many different beings, and prolonged by complicated sufferings, without my being any the wiser for it,—how, I say, can a principle of this sort identify my present with my future interests, and make me as much a participator in what does not at all affect me as if it were actually impressed on my senses? It is plain, as this conscious being may be decompounded, entirely destroyed, renewed again, or multiplied in a great number of beings, and as, whichever

of these takes place, it cannot produce the least alteration in my present being—that what I am does not depend on what I am to be, and that there is no communication between my future interests, and the motives by which my present conduct must be governed. This can no more be influenced by what may be my future feelings with respect to it, than it will then be possible for me to alter my past conduct by wishing that I had acted differently. I cannot, therefore, have a principle of active self-interest arising out of the immediate connection between my present and future self, for no such connection exists, or is possible. I am what I am in spite of the future. My feelings, actions, and interests, must be determined by causes already existing and acting, and are absolutely independent of the future. Where there is not an inter-community of feelings, there can be no identity of interests. My personal interest in anything must refer either to the interest excited by the actual impression of the object, which cannot be felt before it exists, and can last no longer than while the impression lasts; or it may refer to the particular manner in which I am mechanically affected by the idea of my own impressions in the absence of the object. I can, therefore, have no proper personal interest in my future impressions, since neither my ideas of future objects, nor my feelings with respect to them, can be excited either directly or indirectly by themselves. or by any ideas or feelings accompanying them, without a complete transposition of the order in which causes and effects follow one another in nature. The only reason for my preferring my future interest to that of others, must arise from my anticipating it with greater warmth of present imagination. It is this greater liveliness and force with which I can enter into my future feelings, that in a manner identifies them with my present being; and this notion of identity being once formed, the mind makes use of it to strengthen its habitual propensity, by giving to personal motives a reality and absolute truth which they

can never have. Hence it has been inferred that my real, substantial interest in anything must be derived in some indirect manner from the impression of the object itself, as if that could have any sort of communication with my present feelings, or excite any interest in my mind but by means of the imagination, which is naturally affected in a certain manner by the prospect of future good or evil.'[1]

J. D. This is the strangest tale that e'er I heard.

C. D. It is the strangest fellow, brother John!

[1] *Principles of Human Action*, 2nd edit., p. 70.

ON DISAGREEABLE PEOPLE

Those people who are uncomfortable in themselves are disagreeable to others. I do not here mean to speak of persons who offend intentionally, or are obnoxious to dislike from some palpable defect of mind or body, ugliness, pride, ill-humour, etc.; but of those who are disagreeable in spite of themselves, and, as it might appear, with almost every qualification to recommend them to others. This want of success is owing chiefly to something in what is called their *manner;* and this again has its foundation in a certain cross-grained and unsociable state of feeling on their part, which influences us, perhaps, without our distinctly adverting to it. The mind is a finer instrument than we sometimes suppose it, and is not only swayed by overt acts and tangible proofs, but has an instinctive feeling of the air of truth. We find many individuals in whose company we pass our time, and have no particular fault to find with their understandings or character, and yet we are never thoroughly satisfied with them: the reason will turn out to be, upon examination, that they are never thoroughly satisfied with themselves, but uneasy and out of sorts all the time; and this makes us uneasy with them, without our reflecting on, or being able to discover the cause.

Thus, for instance, we meet with persons who do us a number of kindnesses, who show us every mark of respect and good-will, who are friendly and serviceable —and yet we do not feel grateful to them, after all. We reproach ourselves with this as caprice or insensi-

bility, and try to get the better of it; but there is something in their way of doing things that prevents us from feeling cordial or sincerely obliged to them. We think them very worthy people, and would be glad of an opportunity to do them a good turn if it were in our power; but we cannot get beyond this: the utmost we can do is to save appearances, and not come to an open rupture with them. The truth is, in all such cases, we do not sympathise (as we ought) with them, because they do not sympathise (as they ought) with us. They have done what they did from a sense of duty in a cold dry manner, or from a meddlesome busybody humour; or to show their superiority over us, or to patronise our infirmity; or they have dropped some hint by the way, or blundered upon some topic they should not, and have shown, by one means or other, that they were occupied with anything but the pleasure they were affording us, or a delicate attention to our feelings. Such persons may be styled *friendly grievances.* They are commonly people of low spirits and disappointed views, who see the discouraging side of human life, and, with the best intentions in the world, contrive to make everything they have to do with uncomfortable. They are alive to your distress, and take pains to remove it; but they have no satisfaction in the gaiety and ease they have communicated, and are on the *look-out* for some new occasion of signalising their zeal; nor are they backward to insinuate that you will soon have need of their assistance, to guard you against running into fresh difficulties, or to extricate you from them. From large benevolence of soul and 'discourse of reason, looking before and after,' they are continually reminding you of something that has gone wrong in time past, or that may do so in that which is to come, and are surprised that their awkward hints, sly inuendos, blunt questions, and solemn features do not excite all the complacency and mutual good understanding in you which it is intended that they should. When they make themselves miserable on your account, it is hard that you

will not lend them your countenance and support. This deplorable humour of theirs does not hit any one else. They are useful, but not agreeable people; they may assist you in your affairs, but they depress and tyrannise over your feelings. When they have made you happy, they will not let you be so—have no enjoyment of the good they have done—will on no account part with their melancholy and desponding tone—and, by their mawkish insensibility and doleful grimaces, throw a damp over the triumph they are called upon to celebrate. They would keep you in hot water, that they may help you out of it. They will nurse you in a fit of sickness (congenial sufferers!)—arbitrate a law-suit for you, and embroil you deeper—procure you a loan of money;—but all the while they are only delighted with rubbing the sore place, and casting the colour of your mental or other disorders. 'The whole need not a physician'; and, being once placed at ease and comfort, they have no farther use for you as subjects for their singular beneficence, and you are not sorry to be quit of their tiresome interference. The old proverb, *A friend in need is a friend indeed*, is not verified in them. The class of persons here spoken of are the very reverse of *summer friends*, who court you in prosperity, flatter your vanity, are the humble servants of your follies, never see or allude to anything wrong, minister to your gaiety, smooth over every difficulty, and, with the slightest approach of misfortune or of anything unpleasant, take French leave—

> As when, in prime of June, a burnish'd fly,
> Sprung from the meads, o'er which he sweeps along,
> Cheer'd by the breathing bloom and vital sky,
> Tunes up, amid these airy halls, his song,
> Soothing at first the gay reposing throng;
> And oft he sips their bowl, or, nearly drown'd,
> He thence recovering drives their beds among,
> And scares their tender sleep with trump profound;
> Then out again he flies, to wing his mazy round.[1]

However we may despise such triflers, yet we regret

[1] Thomson's *Castle of Indolence*, Canto I. st. 64, edit. 1841.

them more than those well-meaning friends on whom a dull melancholy vapour hangs, that drags them and every one about them to the ground.

Again, there are those who might be very agreeable people, if they had but spirit to be so; but there is a narrow, unaspiring, under-bred tone in all they say or do. They have great sense and information—abound in a knowledge of character—have a fund of anecdote—are unexceptionable in manners and appearance—and yet we cannot make up our minds to like them: we are not glad to see them, nor sorry when they go away. Our familiarity with them, however great, wants the principle of cement, which is a certain appearance of frank cordiality and social enjoyment. They have no pleasure in the subjects of their own thoughts, and therefore can communicate none to others. There is a dry, husky, grating manner—a pettiness of detail—a tenaciousness of particulars, however trifling or unpleasant—a disposition to cavil—an aversion to enlarged and liberal views of things—in short, a hard, painful, unbending *matter-of-factness*, from which the spirit and effect are banished, and the letter only is attended to, which makes it impossible to sympathise with their discourse. To make conversation interesting or agreeable, there is required either the habitual tone of good company, which gives a favourable colouring to everything—or the warmth and enthusiasm of genius, which, though it may occasionally offend or be thrown off its guard, makes amends by its rapturous flights, and flings a glancing light upon all things. The literal and *dogged* style of conversation resembles that of a French picture, or its mechanical fidelity is like evidence given in a court of justice, or a police report.

From the literal to the plain-spoken, the transition is easy. The most efficient weapon of offence is truth. Those who deal in dry and repulsive matters-of-fact, tire out their friends; those who blurt out hard and home truths, make themselves mortal enemies wherever they come. There are your blunt, honest creatures,

who omit no opportunity of letting you know their minds, and are sure to tell you all the ill, and conceal all the good they hear of you. They would not flatter you for the world, and to caution you against the malice of others, they think the province of a friend. This is not candour, but impudence; and yet they think it odd you are not charmed with their unreserved communicativeness of disposition. Gossips and tale-bearers, on the contrary, who supply the *tittle-tattle* of the neighbourhood, flatter you to your face, and laugh at you behind your back, are welcome and agreeable guests in all companies. Though you know it will be your turn next, yet for the sake of the immediate gratification, you are contented to pay your share of the public tax upon character, and are better pleased with the falsehoods that never reach your ears, than with the truths that others (less complaisant and more sincere) utter to your face—so short-sighted and willing to be imposed upon is our self-love! There is a man, who has the air of not being convinced without an argument: you avoid him as if he were a lion in your path. There is another, who asks you fifty questions as to the commonest things you advance: you would sooner pardon a fellow who held a pistol to your breast and demanded your money. No one regards a turnpike-keeper, or a custom-house officer, with a friendly eye: he who stops you in an excursion of fancy, or ransacks the articles of your belief obstinately and churlishly, to distinguish the spurious from the genuine, is still more your foe. These inquisitors and cross-examiners upon system make ten enemies for every controversy in which they engage. The world dread nothing so much as being convinced of their errors. In doing them this piece of service, you make war equally on their prejudices, their interests. their pride, and indolence. You not only set up for a superiority of understanding over them, which they hate, but you deprive them of their ordinary grounds of action, their topics of discourse, of their confidence in themselves, and those to whom they have been

accustomed to look up for instruction and advice. It is making children of them. You unhinge all their established opinions and trains of thought; and after leaving them in this listless, vacant, unsettled state—dissatisfied with their own notions and shocked at yours—you expect them to court and be delighted with your company, because, forsooth, you have only expressed your sincere and conscientious convictions. Mankind are not deceived by professions, unless they choose. They think that this pill of true doctrine, however it may be gilded over, is full of gall and bitterness to them; and, again, it is a maxim of which the vulgar are firmly persuaded, that plain-speaking (as it is called), nine parts in ten, is spleen and self-opinion; and the other part, perhaps, honesty. Those who will not abate an inch in argument, and are always seeking to recover the wind of you, are, in the eye of the world, disagreeable, unconscionable people, who ought to be *sent to Coventry*, or left to wrangle by themselves. No persons, however, are more averse to contradiction than these same dogmatists. What shows our susceptibility on this point is, that there is no flattery so adroit or effectual as that of implicit assent. Any one, however mean his capacity or ill-qualified to judge, who gives way to all our sentiments, and never seems to think but as we do, is indeed an *alter idem*—another self; and we admit him without scruple into our entire confidence, 'yea, into our heart of hearts.'

It is the same in books. Those which, under the disguise of plain speaking, vent paradoxes, and set their faces against the 'common sense' of mankind, are neither 'the volumes

> 'that enrich the shops,
> That pass with approbation through the land';

nor, I fear, can it be added—

> 'That bring their authors an immortal fame.'

They excite a clamour and opposition at first, and are in general soon consigned to oblivion. Even if the

opinions are in the end adopted, the authors gain little by it, and their names remain in their original obloquy; for the public will own no obligations to such ungracious benefactors. In like manner, there are many books written in a very delightful vein, though with little in them, and that are accordingly popular. Their principle is to please, and not to offend; and they succeed in both objects. We are contented with the deference shown to our feelings for the time, and grant a truce both to wit and wisdom. The 'courteous reader' and the good-natured author are well matched in this instance, and find their account in mutual tenderness and forbearance to each other's infirmities. I am not sure that Walton's *Angler* is not a book of this last description—

> That dallies with the innocence of thought,
> Like the old time.

Hobbes and Mandeville are in the opposite extreme, and have met with a correspondent fate. The *Tatler* and *Spectator* are in the golden mean, carry instruction as far as it can go without shocking, and give the most exquisite pleasure without one particle of pain. '*Desire to please, and you will infallibly please,*' is a maxim equally applicable to the study or the drawing-room. Thus, also, we see actors of very small pretensions, and who have scarce any other merit than that of being on good terms with themselves, and in high good humour with their parts (though they hardly understand a word of them), who are universal favourites with the audience. Others, who are masters of their art, and in whom no slip or flaw can be detected, you have no pleasure in seeing, from something dry, repulsive, and unconciliating in their manner; and you almost hate the very mention of their names, as an unavailing appeal to your candid decision in their favour, and as taxing you with injustice for refusing it.

We may observe persons who seem to take a peculiar delight in the *disagreeable*. They catch all sorts of

uncouth tones and gestures, the manners and dialect of clowns and hoydens, and aim at vulgarity as desperately as others ape gentility. [This is what is often understood by a *love of low life.*] They say the most unwarrantable things, without meaning or feeling what they say. What startles or shocks other people, is to them a sport—an amusing excitement—a fillip to their constitutions; and from the bluntness of their perceptions, and a certain wilfulness of spirit, not being able to enter into the refined and agreeable, they make a merit of despising everything of the kind. Masculine women, for example, are those who, not being distinguished by the charms and delicacy of the sex, affect a superiority over it by throwing aside all decorum. We also find another class, who continually do and say what they ought not, and what they do not intend, and who are governed almost entirely by an instinct of absurdity. Owing to a perversity of imagination or irritability of nerve, the idea that a thing is improper acts as a provocation to it: the fear of committing a blunder is so strong, that in their agitation they *bolt* out whatever is uppermost in their minds, before they are aware of the consequence. The dread of something wrong haunts and rivets their attention to it; and an uneasy, morbid apprehensiveness of temper takes away their self-possession, and hurries them into the very mistakes they are most anxious to avoid.

If we look about us, and ask who are the agreeable and disagreeable people in the world, we shall see that it does not so much depend on their virtues or vices—their understanding or stupidity—as on the degree of pleasure or pain they seem to feel in ordinary social intercourse. What signify all the good qualities any one possesses, if he is none the better for them himself? If the cause is so delightful, the effect ought to be so too. We enjoy a friend's society only in proportion as he is satisfied with ours. Even wit, however it may startle, is only agreeable as it is sheathed in good-humour. There are a kind of *intellectual stammerers*,

who are delivered of their good things with pain and effort; and consequently what costs them such evident uneasiness does not impart unmixed delight to the by-standers. There are those, on the contrary, whose sallies cost them nothing—who abound in a flow of pleasantry and good-humour; and who float down the stream with them carelessly and triumphantly—

Wit at the helm, and Pleasure at the prow.

Perhaps it may be said of English wit in general, that it too much resembles pointed lead: after all, there is something heavy and dull in it! The race of small wits are not the least agreeable people in the world. They have their little joke to themselves, enjoy it, and do not set up any preposterous pretensions to thwart the current of our self-love. Toad-eating is accounted a thriving profession; and a *butt*, according to the *Spectator*, is a highly useful member of society—as one who takes whatever is said of him in good part, and as necessary to conduct off the spleen and superfluous petulance of the company. Opposed to these are the swaggering bullies—the licensed wits—the free-thinkers—the loud talkers, who, in the jockey phrase, have *lost their mouths*, and cannot be reined in by any regard to decency or common-sense. The more obnoxious the subject, the more are they charmed with it, converting their want of feeling into a proof of superiority to vulgar prejudice and squeamish affectation. But there is an unseemly exposure of the mind, as well as of the body. There are some objects that shock the sense, and cannot with propriety be mentioned: there are naked truths that offend the mind, and ought to be kept out of sight as much as possible. For human nature cannot bear to be too hardly pressed upon. One of these cynical truisms, when brought forward to the world, may be forgiven as a slip of the pen: a succession of them, denoting a deliberate purpose and *malice prepense*, must ruin any writer. Lord Byron had got into an irregular course of these a little before his death—seemed desirous, in imitation of Mr. Shelley, to run

the gauntlet of public obloquy—and, at the same time, wishing to screen himself from the censure he defied, dedicated his *Cain* to Sir Walter Scott—a pretty godfather to such a bantling!

Some persons are of so teasing and fidgety a turn of mind, that they do not give you a moment's rest. Everything goes wrong with them. They complain of a headache or the weather. They take up a book, and lay it down again—venture an opinion, and retract it before they have half done—offer to serve you, and prevent some one else from doing it. If you dine with them at a tavern, in order to be more at your ease, the fish is too little done—the sauce is not the right one; they ask for a sort of wine which they think is not to be had, or if it is, after some trouble, procured, do not touch it; they give the waiter fifty contradictory orders, and are restless and sit on thorns the whole of dinner-time. All this is owing to a want of robust health, and of a strong spirit of enjoyment: it is a fastidious habit of mind, produced by a valetudinary habit of body: they are out of sorts with everything, and of course their ill-humour and captiousness communicates itself to you, who are as little delighted with them as they are with other things. Another sort of people, equally objectionable with this helpless class, who are disconcerted by a shower of rain or stopped by an insect's wing, are those who, in the opposite spirit, will have everything their own way, and carry all before them—who cannot brook the slightest shadow of opposition—who are always in the heat of an argument—who knit their brows and clench their teeth in some speculative discussion, as if they were engaged in a personal quarrel—and who, though successful over almost every competitor, seem still to resent the very offer of resistance to their supposed authority, and are as angry as if they had sustained some premeditated injury. There is an impatience of temper and an intolerance of opinion in this that conciliates neither our affection nor esteem. To such persons nothing appears of any moment but the indulgence of a domineering intellectual superiority,

to the disregard and discomfiture of their own and every body else's comfort. Mounted on an abstract proposition, they trample on every courtesy and decency of behaviour; and though, perhaps, they do not intend the gross personalities they are guilty of, yet they cannot be acquitted of a want of due consideration for others, and of an intolerable egotism in the support of truth and justice. You may hear one of these Quixotic declaimers pleading the cause of humanity in a voice of thunder, or expatiating on the beauty of a Guido with features distorted with rage and scorn. This is not a very amiable or edifying spectacle.

There are persons who cannot make friends. Who are they? Those who cannot be friends. It is not the want of understanding or good-nature, of entertaining or useful qualities, that you complain of: on the contrary, they have probably many points of attraction; but they have one that neutralises all these—they care nothing about you, and are neither the better nor worse for what you think of them. They manifest no joy at your approach; and when you leave them, it is with a feeling that they can do just as well without you. This is not sullenness, nor indifference, nor absence of mind; but they are intent solely on their own thoughts, and you are merely one of the subjects they exercise them upon. They live in society as in a solitude; and, however their brain works, their pulse beats neither faster nor slower for the common accidents of life. There is, therefore, something cold and repulsive in the air that is about them—like that of marble. In a word, they are *modern philosophers;* and the modern philosopher is what the pedant was of old—a being who lives in a world of his own, and has no correspondence with this. It is not that such persons have not done you services—you acknowledge it; it is not that they have said severe things of you—you submit to it as a necessary evil: but it is the cool manner in which the whole is done that annoys you—the speculating upon you, as if you were nobody—the regarding you, with a view to an experiment *in corpore vili*—the principle of dissection—

the determination to spare no blemishes—to cut you down to your real standard;—in short, the utter absence of the partiality of friendship, the blind enthusiasm of affection, or the delicacy of common decency, that whether they 'hew you as a carcase fit for hounds, or carve you as a dish fit for the gods,' the operation on your feelings and your sense of obligation is just the same; and, whether they are demons or angels in themselves, you wish them equally *at the devil!*

Other persons of worth and sense give way to mere violence of temperament (with which the understanding has nothing to do)—are burnt up with a perpetual fury—repel and throw you to a distance by their restless, whirling motion—so that you dare not go near them, or feel as uneasy in their company as if you stood on the edge of a volcano. They have their *tempora mollia fandi;* but then what a stir may you not expect the next moment! Nothing is less inviting or less comfortable than this state of uncertainty and apprehension. Then there are those who never approach you without the most alarming advice or information, telling you that you are in a dying way, or that your affairs are on the point of ruin, by way of disburthening their consciences; and others, who give you to understand much the same thing as a good joke, out of sheer impertinence, constitutional vivacity, and want of something to say. All these, it must be confessed, are disagreeable people; and you repay their over-anxiety or total forgetfulness of you, by a determination to *cut* them as speedily as possible. We meet with instances of persons who overpower you by a sort of boisterous mirth and rude animal spirits, with whose ordinary state of excitement it is as impossible to keep up as with that of any one really intoxicated; and with others who seem scarce alive—who take no pleasure or interest in anything—who are born to exemplify the maxim,

> Not to admire is all the art I know
> To make men happy, or to keep them so,—

and whose mawkish insensibility or sullen scorn are

the determination to spare no blemishes—to cut you down to your real standard;—in short, the utter absence of the partiality of friendship, the blind enthusiasm of affection, or the delicacy of common decency, that whether they 'hew you as a carcase fit for hounds, or carve you as a dish fit for the gods,' the operation on your feelings and your sense of obligation is just the same; and, whether they are demons or angels in themselves, you wish them equally *at the devil!*

Other persons of worth and sense give way to mere violence of temperament (with which the understanding has nothing to do)—are burnt up with a perpetual fury—repel and throw you to a distance by their restless, whirling motion—so that you dare not go near them, or feel as uneasy in their company as if you stood on the edge of a volcano. They have their *tempora mollia fandi;* but then what a stir may you not expect the next moment! Nothing is less inviting or less comfortable than this state of uncertainty and apprehension. Then there are those who never approach you without the most alarming advice or information, telling you that you are in a dying way, or that your affairs are on the point of ruin, by way of disburthening their consciences; and others, who give you to understand much the same thing as a good joke, out of sheer impertinence, constitutional vivacity, and want of something to say. All these, it must be confessed, are disagreeable people; and you repay their over-anxiety or total forgetfulness of you, by a determination to *cut* them as speedily as possible. We meet with instances of persons who overpower you by a sort of boisterous mirth and rude animal spirits, with whose ordinary state of excitement it is as impossible to keep up as with that of any one really intoxicated; and with others who seem scarce alive—who take no pleasure or interest in anything—who are born to exemplify the maxim,

> Not to admire is all the art I know
> To make men happy, or to keep them so,—

and whose mawkish insensibility or sullen scorn are

equally annoying. In general, all people brought up in remote country places, where life is crude and harsh —all sectaries—all partisans of a losing cause, are discontented and disagreeable. Commend me above all to the Westminster School of Reform, whose blood runs as cold in their veins as the torpedo's, and whose touch jars like it. Catholics are, upon the whole, more amiable than Protestants—foreigners than English people Among ourselves, the Scotch, as a nation, are particularly disagreeable. They hate every appearance of comfort themselves, and refuse it to others. Their climate, their religion, and their habits are equally averse to pleasure. Their manners are either distinguished by a fawning sycophancy (to gain their own ends, and conceal their natural defects), that makes one sick; or by a morose, unbending callousness, that makes one shudder. I had forgot to mention two other descriptions of persons who fall under the scope of this essay:—those who take up a subject, and run on with it interminably, without knowing whether their hearers care one word about it, or in the least minding what reception their oratory meets with—these are pretty generally voted *bores* (mostly German ones);—and others, who may be designated as practical paradox-mongers—who discard the 'milk of human kindness,' and an attention to common observances, from all their actions, as effeminate and puling—who wear an out-of-the-way hat as a mark of superior understanding, and carry home a handkerchief full of mushrooms in the top of it as an original discovery—who give you craw-fish for supper instead of lobsters; seek their company in a garret, and over a gin-bottle, to avoid the imputation of affecting genteel society; and discard their friends after a term of years, and warn others against them, as being *honest fellows*, which is thought a vulgar prejudice. This is carrying the harsh and repulsive even beyond the disagreeable—to the hateful. Such persons are generally people of commonplace understandings, obtuse feelings, and inordinate vanity. They are formidable if they get

you in their power—otherwise, they are only to be laughed at.

There are a vast number who are disagreeable from meanness of spirit, downright insolence, from slovenliness of dress or disgusting tricks, from folly or ignorance; but these causes are positive moral or physical defects, and I only meant to speak of that repulsiveness of manners which arises from want of tact and sympathy with others. So far of friendship: a word, if I durst, of love. Gallantry to women (the sure road to their favour) is nothing but the appearance of extreme devotion to all their wants and wishes—a delight in their satisfaction, and a confidence in yourself, as being able to contribute towards it. The slightest indifference with regard to them, or distrust of yourself, are equally fatal. The amiable is the voluptuous in looks, manner, or words. No face that exhibits this kind of expression—whether lively or serious, obvious or suppressed, will be thought ugly—no address, awkward—no lover who approaches every woman he meets as his mistress, will be unsuccessful. Diffidence and awkwardness are the two antidotes to love.

To please universally, we must be pleased with ourselves and others. There should be a tinge of the coxcomb, an oil of self-complacency, an anticipation of success—there should be no gloom, no moroseness, no shyness—in short, there should be very little of the Englishman, and a good deal of the Frenchman. But though, I believe, this is the receipt, we are none the nearer making use of it. It is impossible for those who are naturally disagreeable ever to become otherwise. This is some consolation, as it may save a world of useless pains and anxiety. '*Desire to please, and you will infallibly please,*' is a true maxim; but it does not follow that it is in the power of all to practise it. A vain man, who thinks he is endeavouring to please, is only endeavouring to shine, and is still farther from the mark. An irritable man, who puts a check upon himself, only grows dull, and loses spirit to be anything.

Good temper and a happy turn of mind (which are the indispensable requisites) can no more be commanded than good health or good looks; and though the plain and sickly need not distort their features, and may abstain from excess, this is all they can do. The utmost a disagreeable person can do is to hope, by care and study, to become less disagreeable than he is, and to pass unnoticed in society. With this negative character he should be contented, and may build his fame and happiness on other things.

I will conclude with a description of men who neither please nor aspire to please anybody, and who can come in nowhere so properly as at the fag-end of an essay:—I mean that class of discontented but amusing persons, who are infatuated with their own ill success, and reduced to despair by a lucky turn in their favour. While all goes well, they are *like fish out of water*. They have no reliance on or sympathy with their good fortune, and look upon it as a momentary delusion. Let a doubt be thrown on the question, and they begin to be full of lively apprehensions again: let all their hopes vanish, and they feel themselves on firm ground once more. From want of spirit, or from habit, their imaginations cannot rise above the low ground of humility—cannot reflect the gay, flaunting tints of the fancy—flag and droop into despondency—and can neither indulge the expectation, nor employ the means of success. Even when it is within their reach, they dare not lay hands upon it; and shrink from unlooked-for bursts of prosperity, as something of which they are both ashamed and unworthy. The class of *croakers* here spoken of are less delighted with other people's misfortunes than with their own. Their neighbours may have some pretensions—they have none. Querulous complaints and anticipations of discomfort are the food on which they live; and they at last acquire a passion for that which is the favourite theme of their thoughts, and can no more do without it than without the pinch of snuff with which they season their conversation, and enliven the pauses of their daily prognostics.

ON KNOWLEDGE OF THE WORLD

Who shall go about to cozen fortune, or wear the badge of honour without the stamp of merit?

A KNOWLEDGE of the world is generally supposed to be the fruit of experience and observation, or of a various, practical acquaintance with men and things. On the contrary, it appears to me to be a kind of instinct, arising out of a peculiar construction and turn of mind. Some persons display this knowledge at their first outset in life: others, with all their opportunities and dear-bought lessons, never acquire it to the end of their career. In fact, a knowledge of the world only means a knowledge of [illegible]n interest; it is nothing but a species of selfish [illegible]r ramification of the law of self-preservation. There may be said to be two classes of people in the world, which remain for ever distinct: those who consider things in the abstract, or with a reference to truth, and those who consider them only with a reference to themselves, or to the *main chance*. The first, whatever may be their acquirements or discoveries, wander through life in a sort of absence of mind, or comparative state of sleep-walking: the last, though their attention is riveted to a single point of view, are always on the alert, know perfectly well what they are about, and calculate with the greatest nicety the effect which their words or actions will have on others. They do not trouble themselves about the arguments on any subject; they know the opinion entertained on it, and that is enough for them to regulate themselves by; the rest they

regard as quite Utopian, and foreign to the purpose. 'Subtle as the fox for prey, like warlike as the wolf for what they eat,' they leave mere speculative points to those who, from some unaccountable bias or caprice, take an interest in what does not personally concern them, and make good the old saying, that 'the children of the world are wiser in their generation than the children of the light!'

The man of the world is to the man of science very much what the chameleon is to the armadillo: the one takes its hue from every surrounding object, and is undistinguishable from them; the other is shut up in a formal crust of knowledge, and clad in an armour of proof, from which the shaft of ridicule or the edge of disappointment falls equally pointless. It is no uncommon case to see a person come into a room, which he enters awkwardly enough, and has nothing in his dress or appearance to recommend him, but after the first embarrassments are over, sits down, takes his share in the conversation, in which he acquits himself creditably, shows sense, reading, and shrewdness, expresses himself with point, articulates distinctly, when he blunders on some topic which he might see is disagreeable, but persists in it the more as he finds others shrink from it; mentions a book of which you have not heard, and perhaps do not wish to hear, and he therefore thinks himself bound to favour you with the contents; gets into an argument with one, proses on with another on a subject in which his hearer has no interest; and when he goes away, people remark, 'What a pity that Mr. —— has not more knowledge of the world, and has so little skill in adapting himself to the tone and manners of society!' But will time and habit cure him of this defect? Never. He wants a certain *tact*, he has not a voluntary power over his ideas, but is like a person reading out of a book, or who can only pour out the budget of knowledge with which his brain is crammed in all places and companies alike. If you attempt to divert his attention from the general subject to the persons he is addressing, you

puzzle and stop him quite. He is a mere conversing automaton. He has not the *sense of personality*—the faculty of perceiving the effect (as well as the grounds) of his opinions: and how then should failure or mortification give it him? It must be a painful reflection, and he must be glad to turn from it; or, after a few reluctant and unsuccessful efforts to correct his errors, he will try to forget or harden himself in them. Finding that he makes so slow and imperceptible a progress in amending his faults, he will take his swing in the opposite direction, will triumph and revel in his supposed excellences, will launch out into the wide, untrammelled field of abstract speculation, and silence envious sneers and petty cavils by force of argument and dint of importunity. You will find him the same character at sixty that he was at thirty; or, should time soften down some of his asperities, and tire him of his absurdities as he has tired others, nothing will transform him into a man of the world, and he will die in a garret, or a paltry second-floor, from not having been able to acquire the art 'to see himself as others see him,' or to dress his opinions, looks, and actions in the smiles and approbation of the world. On the other hand, take a youth from the same town (perhaps a school-fellow, and the dunce of the neighbourhood); he has 'no figures, nor no fantasies which busy thought draws in the brain of men,' no preconceived notions by which he must square his conduct or his conversation, no dogma to maintain in the teeth of opposition, no Shibboleth to which he must force others to subscribe; the progress of science or the good of his fellow-creatures are things about which he has not the remotest conception, or the smallest particle of anxiety—

> His soul proud science never taught to stray
> Far as the solar walk, or milky way;

all that he sees or attends to is the immediate path before him, or what can encourage or lend him a helping hand through it; his mind is a complete blank, on

which the world may write its maxims and customs in what characters it pleases; he has only to study its humours, flatter its prejudices, and take advantage of its foibles; while walking the streets he is not taken up with solving an abstruse problem, but with considering his own appearance and that of others; instead of contradicting a patron, assents to all he hears; and in every proposition that comes before him asks himself only what he can get by it, and whether it will make him friends or enemies: such a one is said to possess great penetration and knowledge of the world, understands his place in society, gets on in it, rises from the counter to the counting-house, from the dependant to be a partner, amasses a fortune, gains in size and respectability as his affairs prosper, has his town and country house, and ends with buying up half the estates in his native county!

The great secret of a knowledge of the world, then, consists in a subserviency to the will of others, and the primary motive to this attention is a mechanical and watchful perception of our own interest. It is not an art that requires a long course of study, the difficulty is in putting one's-self apprentice to it. It does not surely imply any very laborious or profound inquiry into the distinctions of truth or falsehood to be able to assent to whatever one hears; nor any great refinement of moral feeling to approve of whatever has custom, power, or interest on its side. The only question is, 'Who is willing to do so?'—and the answer is, those who have no other faculties or pretensions, either to stand in the way of, or to assist their progress through life. Those are slow to wear the livery of the world who have any independent resources of their own. It is not that the philosopher, or the man of genius, does not see and know all this, that he is not constantly and forcibly reminded of it by his own failure or the success of others, but he cannot stoop to practise it. He has a different scale of excellence and mould of ambition, which have nothing in common with current maxims and time-serving cal-

culations. He is a moral and intellectual egotist, not a mere worldly-minded one. In youth, he has sanguine hopes and brilliant dreams, which he cannot sacrifice for sordid realities—as he advances farther in life, habit and pride forbid his turning back. He cannot bring himself to give up his best-grounded convictions to a blockhead, or his conscientious principles to a knave, though he might make his fortune by so doing. The rule holds good here, as well as in another sense—'What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?' If his convictions and principles had been less strong, they would have yielded long ago to the suggestions of his interest, and he would have relapsed into the man of the world, or rather he would never have had the temptation or capacity to be anything else. One thing that keeps men honest, as well as that confirms them knaves, is their incapacity to do any better for themselves than nature has done for them. One person can with difficulty speak the truth, as another lies with a very ill grace. After repeated awkward attempts to change characters, they each very properly fall back into their old *jog-trot* path, as best suited to their genius and habits.

There are individuals who make themselves and every one else uncomfortable by trying to be agreeable, and who are only to be endured in their natural characters of blunt, plain-spoken people. Many a man would have turned rogue if he had known how. *Non ex quotibet ligno fit Mercurius.* The modest man cannot be impudent if he would. The man of sense cannot play the fool to advantage. It is not the mere resolution to act a part that will enable us to do it, without a natural genius and fitness for it. Some men are born to be valets, as others are to be courtiers. There is the climbing *genus* in man as well as in plants. It is sometimes made a wonder how men of 'no mark or likelihood' frequently rise to court preferment, and make their way against all competition. That is the very reason. They present no tangible point; they

offend no feeling of self-importance. They are a perfect unresisting medium of patronage and favour. They aspire through servility; they repose in insignificance. A man of talent or pretension in the same circumstances would be kicked out in a week. A look that implied a doubt, a hint that suggested a difference of opinion, would be fatal. It is of no use, in parleying with absolute power, to dissemble, to suppress: there must be no feelings or opinions to dissemble or suppress. The artifice of the dependant is not a match for the jealousy of the patron: 'The soul must be subdued to the very quality of its lord.' Where all is annihilated in the presence of the Sovereign, is it astonishing that *nothings* should succeed? Ciphers are as necessary in courts as eunuchs in seraglios.

I do not think Mr. Cobbett would succeed in an interview with the Prince. Bub Doddington said, 'He would not justify before his Sovereign, even where his own character was at stake. I am afraid we could hardly reckon upon the same forbearance in Mr. Cobbett where his country's welfare was at stake, and where he had an opportunity of vindicating it. He might have a great deal of reason on his side; but he might forget, or seem to forget, that as the King is above the law, he is also above reason. Reason is but a suppliant at the foot of thrones, and waits for their approval or rebuke. *Salus populi suprema lex*—may be a truism anywhere else. If reason dares to approach them at all, it must be in the shape of deference and humility, not of headstrong importunity and self-will. Instead of breathless awe, of mild entreaty, of humble remonstrance, it is Mr. Cobbett who, upon very slight encouragement, would give the law, and the Monarch who must kiss the rod. The reformer would be too full of his own opinion to allow an option even to Majesty, and the affair would have the same ending as that of the old ballad—

> Then the Queen, overhearing what Betty did say,
> Would send Mr. Roper to take her away.

As I have brought Mr. Cobbett in here by the neck and shoulders, I may add, that I do not think he belongs properly to the class, either of philosophical speculators, or men of the world. He is a political humorist. He is too much taken up with himself either to attend to right reason or to judge correctly of what passes around him. He mistakes strength of purpose and passion, not only for truth, but for success. Because he can give fifty good reasons for a thing, he thinks it not only *ought* to be, but *must* be. Because he is swayed so entirely by his wishes and humours, he believes others will be ready to give up their perjudices, interests, and resentments to oblige him. He persuades himself that he is the fittest person to represent Westminster in parliament, and he considers this point (once proved) tantamount to his return. He knows no more of the disposition or sentiments of the people of Westminster than of the inhabitants of the moon (except from what he himself chooses to say or write of them), and it is this want of sympathy which, as much as anything, prevents his being chosen. The exclusive force and bigotry of his opinions deprives them of half their influence and effect, by allowing no toleration to others, and consequently setting them against him.

Mr. Cobbett seemed disappointed, at one time, at not succeeding in the character of a legacy-hunter. Why, a person, to succeed in this character, ought to be a mere skin or bag to hold money, a place to deposit it in, a shadow, a deputy, a trustee who keeps it for the original owner—so that the transfer is barely nominal, and who, if the donor were to return from the other world, would modestly yield it up—one who has no personal identity of his own, no will to encroach upon or dispose of it, otherwise than his patron would wish after his death—not a hairbrained egotist, a dashing adventurer, to squander, hector, and flourish away with it in wild schemes and ruinous experiments, every one of them at variance with the opinions of the testator, in new methods of turnip-hoeing; in specula-

tions in madder—this would be to tear his soul from his body twice over—

> His patron's ghost from Limbo lake the while
> Sees this which more damnation doth upon him pile!

Mr. Cobbett complained, that in his last interview with Baron Maseres, that gentleman was in his dotage, and that his reverend legatee sat at the bottom of the table, cutting a poor figure, and not contradicting a word the Baron said. No doubt, as he has put this in print in the exuberance of his dissatisfaction, he let both gentlemen see pretty plainly what he thought of them, and fancied that this expression of his contempt, [illegible] gratified him, was the way to ensure the good will of the one to make over his whole estate, or the good word of the other to let him *go snacks*. This is a new way of being *quits* with one's benefactors, and an egregious *quid pro quo*. If Baron Maseres had left Mr. Cobbett £200,000 it must have been not to write his epitaph, or visit him in his last moments!

A gossiping chambermaid who only smiles and assents when her mistress wishes to talk, or an ignorant country clown who stands with his hat off when he has a favour to ask of the squire (and if he is wise, at all other times), knows more of the matter. A knowledge of mankind is little more than Sir Pertinax's instinct of *bowing*, or of 'never standing upright in the presence of a great man,' or of that great blockhead, the world. It is not a perception of truth, but a sense of power, and an instant determination of the will to submit to it. It is, therefore less an intellectual acquirement than a natural disposition. It is on this account that I think both cunning and wisdom are a sort of original endowments, or attain maturity much earlier than is supposed, from their being moral qualities, and having their seat in the heart rather than the head. The difference depends on the *manner* of seeing things. The one is a selfish, the other is a disinterested view of nature. The one is the clear open look of integrity, the other is a contracted and blear-eyed obliquity of

mental vision. If any one has but the courage and honesty to look at an object as it is in itself, or divested of prejudice, fear, and favour, he will be sure to see it pretty right; as he who regards it through the refractions of opinion and fashion, will be sure to see it distorted and falsified, however the error may redound to his own advantage. Certainly, he who makes the universe tributary to his convenience, and subjects all his impressions of what is right or wrong, true or false, black or white, round or square, to the standard and maxims of the world, who never utters a proposition but he fancies a patron close at his elbow who overhears him, who is even afraid, in private, to suffer an honest conviction to rise in his mind, lest it should mount to his lips, get wind, and ruin his prospects in life, ought to gain something in exchange for the restraint and force put upon his thoughts and faculties: on the contrary, he who is confined by no such petty and debasing trammels, whose comprehension of mind is 'in large heart enclosed,' finds his inquiries and his views expand in a degree commensurate with the universe around him; makes truth welcome wherever he meets her, and receives her cordial embrace in return. To see things divested of passion and interest, is to see them [illegible] the eye of history and philosophy. It is easy to judge right, or at least to come to a mutual understanding, in matters of history and abstract morality. Why, then, is it so difficult to arrive at the same calm certainty in actual life? Because the passions and interests are concerned, and it requires so much more candour, love of truth, and independence of spirit to encounter 'the world and its dread laugh,' to throw aside every sinister consideration, and grapple with the plain merits of the case. To be wiser than other men is to be honester than they; and strength of mind is only courage to see and speak the truth. Perhaps the courage may be also owing to the strength; but both go together, and are natural, and not acquired. Do we not see in fables the force of the moral principle in detecting the truth? The only

effect of fables is, by making inanimate or irrational things actors in the scene, to remove the case completely from our own sphere, to take our self-love off its guard, to simplify the question; and yet the result of this obvious appeal is allowed to be universal and irresistible. Is not this another example that 'the heart of man is deceitful above all things'; or, that it is less our incapacity to distinguish what is right, than our secret determination to adhere to what is wrong, that prevents our discriminating one from the other? It is not that great and useful truths are not manifest and discernible in themselves; but little, dirty objects get between them and us, and from being near and gross, hide the lofty and distant. The first business of the patriot and the philanthropist is to overleap this barrier, to rise out of this material dross. Indignation, contempt of the base and grovelling, makes the philosopher no less than the poet; and it is the power of looking beyond self that enables each to inculcate moral truth and nobleness of sentiment, the one by general precepts, the other by individual example.

I have no quarrel with men of the world, mere *muck-worms*; every one after his fashion, 'as the flesh and fortune shall serve'; but I confess I have a little distaste to those who, having set out as loud and vaunting enthusiasts, have turned aside to 'tread the primrose path of dalliance,' and to revile those who did not choose to follow so edifying an example. The candid brow and elastic spring of youth may be exchanged for the wrinkles and crookedness of age; but at least we should retain something of the erectness and openness of our first unbiassed thoughts. I cannot understand how any degree of egotism can dispense with the consciousness of personal identity. As we advance farther in life, we are naturally inclined to revert in imagination to its commencement; but what can those dwell upon there who find only feelings that they despise, and opinions that they have abjured?

'If thine eye offend thee, pluck it out and cast it from thee': but the operation is a painful one, and the

body remains after it only a mutilated fragment. Generally, those who are cut off from this resource in former recollections, make up for it (as well as they can) by an exaggerated and anxious fondness for their late-espoused convictions — a thing unsightly and indecent. Why does he who at one time despises 'the little Chapel Bell,' afterwards write 'the Book of the Church?' The one is not an atonement for the other; each shows only a juvenile or a superannuated precocity of judgment. It is uniting Camille-Desmoulins and Camille-Jourdan (Jourdan of the Chimes) in one character. I should like, not out of malice, but from curiosity, to see Mr. Southey rewrite the beautiful poem on 'his own miniature-picture, when he was two years old,' and see what he would substitute for the lines—

> And it was thought
> That thou shouldst tread preferment's flowery path,
> Young Robert!

There must here, I think, be *hiatus in manuscriptis:* the verse must halt a little! The laureate and his friends say that they are still labouring in the same design as ever, correcting the outlines and filling up the unfinished sketch of their early opinions. They seem rather to have quite blotted them out, and to have taken a fresh canvas to begin another, and no less extravagant caricature. Or their new and old theories remind one of those heads in picture-dealers' shops, where one half of the face is thoroughly cleaned and repaired, and the other left covered with stains and dirt, to show the necessity of the picture-scourer's art: the transition offends the sight.

It may be made a question whether men grow wiser as they grow older, any more than they grow stronger or healthier or honester. They may, in one sense, imbibe a greater portion of worldly wisdom, and have their romantic flights tamed to the level of every day's practice and experience; but perhaps it would be better if some of the extravagance and enthusiasm of youth could be infused into the latter, instead of being

absorbed (perforce) in that sink of pride, envy, selfishness, ignorance, conceit, prejudice, and hypocrisy. One thing is certain, that this is the present course of events, and that if the individual grows wiser as he gains experience, the world does not, and that the tardy penitent who is treading back his steps, may meet the world advancing as he is retreating, and adopting more and more of the genuine impulses and disinterested views of youth into its creed. It is, indeed, only by conforming to some such original and unsophisticated standard, that it can acquire either soundness or consistency. The appeal is a fair one, from the bad habits of society to the unprejudiced aspirations and impressions of human nature.

It seems, in truth, a hard case to have all the world against us, and to require uncommon fortitude (not to say presumption) to stand out single against such a host. The bare suggestion must 'give us pause,' and has no doubt overturned many an honest conviction. The *opinion of the world* (as it pompously entitles itself), if it means anything more than a set of local and party prejudices, with which only our interest, not truth, is concerned, is a shadow, a bugbear, and a contradiction in terms. *Having all the world against us,* is a phrase without a meaning; for in those points in which all the world agree, no one differs from the world. If all the world were of the same way of thinking, and always kept in the same mind, it would certainly be a little staggering to have them against you. But however widely and angrily they may differ from you, they differ quite as much from one another, and even from themselves. What is gospel at one moment, is heresy the next: different countries and climates have different notions of things. When you are put on your trial, therefore, for impugning the public opinion, you may always *subpœna* this great body against itself. For example, I have been twitted for somewhere calling Tom Paine a great writer, and no doubt his reputation at present 'does somewhat smack': yet in 1792 he was so great, and so popular an author, and so much

read and admired by numbers who would not now mention his name, that the Government was obliged to suspend the Constitution, and to go to war to counteract the effects of his popularity. His extreme popularity was then the cause (by a common and vulgar *reaction*) of his extreme obnoxiousness. If the opinion of the world, then, contradicts itself, why may not I contradict it, or choose at what time, and to what extent, I will agree with it? I have been accused of abusing dissenters, and saying that sectaries, in general, are dry and suspicious; and I believe that all the world will say the same thing except themselves. I have said that the church people are proud and overbearing, which has given them umbrage, though in this I have all the sectaries on my side. I have laughed at the Methodists, and for this I have been accused of glancing at religion: yet who but a Methodist does not laugh at the Methodists as well as myself? But I also laugh at those who laugh at them. I have pointed out by turns the weak sides and foibles of different sects and parties, and they themselves maintain that they respectively are perfect and infallible: and this is what is called having all the world against me. I have inveighed all my life against the insolence of the Tories, and for this I have the authority both of Whigs and Radicals; but then I have occasionally spoken against the indecision of the Whigs, and the extravagance of the Radicals, and thus have brought all three on my back, though two out of the three regularly agree with all I say of the third party. Poets do not approve of what I have said of their turning prose writers; nor do the politicians approve of my tolerating the fooleries of the fanciful tribe at all: so they make common cause to *damn* me between them. People never excuse the drawback from themselves, nor the concessions to an adversary: such is the justice and candour of mankind! Mr. Wordsworth is not satisfied with the praise I have heaped upon himself, and still less, that I have allowed Mr. Moore to be a poet at all. I do not think I have ever set my face against the

popular idols of the day; I have been among the foremost in crying up Mrs. Siddons, Kean, Sir Walter Scott, Madame Pasta, and others; and as to the great names of former times, my admiration has been lavish, and sometimes almost mawkish. I have dissented, it is true, in one or two instances; but that only shows that I judge for myself, not that I make a point of contradicting the general taste. I have been more to blame in trying to push certain Illustrious Obscure into notice: — they have not forgiven the obligation, nor the world the tacit reproach. As to my personalities, they might quite as well be termed *impersonalities*. I am so intent on the abstract proposition and its elucidation, that I regard everything else of very subordinate consequence: my friends, I conceive, will not refuse to contribute to so laudable an undertaking, and my enemies *must!* I have found fault with the French, I have found fault with the English; and pray, do they not find great, mutual, and just fault with one another? It may seem a great piece of arrogance in any one, to set up his individual and private judgment against that of ten millions of people; but cross the channel, and you will have thirty millions on your side. Even should the thirty millions come over to the opinions of the ten (a thing that may happen to-morrow), still one need not despair. I remember my old friend Peter Finnerty laughing very heartily at something I had written about the Scotch, but it was followed up by a sketch of the Irish, on which he closed the book, looked grave, and said he disapproved entirely of all national reflections. Thus you have all the world on your side, except the party concerned. What any set of people think or say of themselves is hardly a rule for others: yet, if you do not attach yourself to some one set of people and principles, and stick to them through thick and thin, instead of giving your opinion fairly and fully all round, you must expect to have all the world against you, for no other reason than because you express sincerely, and *for their good*, not only what they say of others, but what is said of themselves,

which they would fain keep a profound secret, and prevent the divulging of under the severest pains and penalties. When I told Jeffrey that I had composed a work in which I had 'in some sort handled' about a score of leading characters, he said, 'Then you will have one man against you, and the remaining nineteen for you!' I have not found it so. In fact, these persons would agree pretty nearly to all that I say, and allow that, in nineteen points out of twenty, I am right; but the twentieth, that relates to some imperfection of their own, weighs down all the rest, and produces an unanimous verdict against the author. There is but one thing in which the world agree, a certain bigoted blindness, and conventional hypocrisy, without which, according to Mandeville (that is, if they really spoke what they thought and knew of one another), they would fall to cutting each other's throats immediately.

We find the same contrariety and fluctuation of opinion in different ages, as well as countries and classes. For about a thousand years, during 'the high and palmy state' of the Romish hierarchy, it was agreed (*nemine contradicente*) that *two and two made five:* afterwards, for above a century, there was great battling and controversy to prove that they made four and a half; then, for a century more, it was thought a great stride taken to come down to four and a quarter; and, perhaps, in another century or two, it will be discovered for a wonder that *two and two actually make four!* It is said, that this slow advance and perpetual interposition of impediments is a salutary check to the rashness of innovation, and to hazardous experiments. At least, it is a very effectual one, amounting almost to a prohibition. One age is employed in building up an absurdity, and the next exhausts all its wit and learning, zeal and fury, in battering it down, so that at the end of two generations you come to the point where you set out, and have to begin again. These heats and disputes about external points of faith may be things of no consequence, since under all the

variations of form or doctrine the essentials of practice remain the same. It does not seem so; at any rate, the non-essentials appear to excite all the interest, and 'keep this dreadful pudder o'er our heads'; and when the dogma is once stripped of mystery and intolerance, and reduced to common sense, no one appears to take any further notice of it.

The appeal, then, to the authority of the world, chiefly resolves itself into the old proverb, that 'when you are at Rome you must do as those at Rome do'; that is, it is a shifting circle of local prejudices and gratuitous assumptions, a successful conformity to which is best insured by a negation of all other qualities that might interfere with it: solid reason and virtue are out of the question. But it may be insisted, that there are qualities of a more practical order that may greatly contribute to and facilitate our advancement in life, such as presence of mind, convivial talents, insight into character, thorough acquaintance with the profounder principles and secret springs of society, and so forth: I do not deny that all this may be of advantage in extraordinary cases, and often abridge difficulties, but I do not think that it is either necessary or generally useful. For instance, habitual caution and reserve is a surer resource than presence of mind, or quick-witted readiness of expedient, which, though it gets men out of scrapes, as often leads them into them by begetting a false confidence. Persons of agreeable and lively talents often find to their cost that one indiscretion procures them more enemies than ten agreeable sallies do friends. A too great penetration into character is less desirable than a certain power of hoodwinking ourselves to their defects, unless the former is accompanied with a profound hypocrisy, which is also liable to detection and discomfiture: and as to general maxims and principles of worldly knowledge, I conceive that an instinctive sympathy with them is much more profitable than their incautious discovery and formal announcement. Thus the politic rule, 'When a great wheel goes up a

hill, cling fast to it ; when a great wheel runs down a hill, let go your hold of it,' may be useful as a hint or warning to the shyness of fidelity of an Englishman ; a North Briton feels its truth instinctively, and acts upon it unconsciously. When it is observed in the *History of a Foundling*, that 'Mr Alworthy had done so many charitable actions that he had made enemies of the whole parish,' the sarcasm is the dictate of a generous indignation at ingratitute rather than a covert apology for selfish niggardliness. Misanthropic reflections have their source in philanthropic sentiments; the real despiser of the world keeps up appearances with it, and is at pains to varnish over its vices and follies, even to himself, lest his secret should be betrayed, and do him an injury. Those who see completely into the world begin to play tricks with it, and overreach themselves by being too knowing : it is even possible to *out-cant* it, and get laughed at that way. Fielding knew something of the world, yet he did not make a fortune. Sir Walter Scott has twice made a fortune by descriptions of nature and character, and has twice lost it by the fondness for speculative gains. Wherever there is a strong faculty for anything, the exercise of that faculty becomes its own end and reward, and produces an indifference or inattention to other things ; so that the best security for success in the world is an incapacity for success in any other way. A bookseller, to succeed in his business, should have no knowledge of books, except as marketable commodities : the instant he has a taste, an opinion of his own on the subject, he may consider himself as a ruined man. In like manner, a picture-dealer should know nothing of pictures but the catalogue price, the cant of the day. The moment he has a feeling for the art, he will be tenacious of it : a Guido, a Salvator 'will be the fatal Cleopatra for which he will lose all he is worth, and be content to lose it.' Should a general, then, know nothing of war, a physician of medicine? No : because this is an art and not a trick, and the one has to contend with nature, and the other

with an enemy, and not to pamper and cajole the follies of the world. It requires also great talents to overturn the world; not to push one's fortune in it: to rule the state like Cromwell or Buonaparte; not, to rise in it like Castlereagh or Croker. Yet, even in times of crisis and convulsion, he who outrages the feeling of the moment and echoes the wildest extravagance, succeeds; as, in times of peace and tranquillity, he does so who acquiesces most tamely in the ordinary routine of things. This may serve to point out another error, common to men of the world, who sometimes, giving themselves credit for more virtue than they possess, declare very candidly that if they had to begin life over again, they would have been *great rogues*. The answer to this is, that then they would have been *hanged*. No: the way to get on in the world is to be neither more nor less wise, neither better nor worse than your neighbours, neither to be a 'reformer nor a house-breaker,' neither to advance before the age nor lag behind it, but to be as like it as possible, to reflect its image and superscription at every turn, and then you will be its darling and its delight, and it will dandle you and fondle you, and make much of you, as a monkey doats upon its young! The knowledge of vice—that is, of *statutable* vice—is not the knowledge of the world; otherwise, a Bow Street runner and the keeper of a house of ill fame would be the most knowing characters, and would soon rise above their professions.

July 1827.

ON FASHION

Born of nothing, begot of nothing.

His garment neither was of silk nor say,
But painted plumes in goodly order dight,
Like as the sun-burnt Indians do array,
Their tawny bodies in their proudest plight:
As those same plumes, so seemed he vain and light,
That of his gait might easily appear;
For still he fared as dancing in delight,
And in his hands a windy fan did bear,
That in the idle air he moved still here and there.

FASHION is an odd jumble of contradictions, of sympathies and antipathies. It exists only by its being participated among a certain number of persons, and its essence is destroyed by being communicated to a greater number. It is a continual struggle between 'the great vulgar and the small' to get the start of, or keep up with each other in the race of appearances, by an adoption on the part of the one of such external and fantastic symbols as strike the attention and excite the envy or admiration of the beholder, and which are no sooner made known and exposed to public view for this purpose, than they are successfully copied by the multitude, the slavish herd of imitators, who do not wish to be behindhand with their betters in outward show and pretensions, and then sink without any further notice into disrepute and contempt. Thus fashion lives only in a perpetual round of giddy innovation and restless vanity. To be old-fashioned is the greatest crime a coat or a hat can be guilty of. To look like nobody else is a sufficiently mortifying

reflection; to be in danger of being mistaken for one of the rabble is worse. Fashion constantly begins and ends in the two things it abhors most, singularity and vulgarity. It is the perpetual setting up and then disowning a certain standard of taste, elegance, and refinement, which has no other foundation or authority than that it is the prevailing distraction of the moment, which was yesterday ridiculous from its being new, and to-morrow will be odious from its being common. It is one of the most slight and insignificant of all things. It cannot be lasting, for it depends on the constant change and shifting of its own harlequin disguises; it cannot be sterling, for, if it were, it could not depend on the breath of caprice; it must be superficial, to produce its immediate effect on the gaping crowd; and frivolous, to admit of its being assumed at pleasure, by the numbers of those who affect, by being in the fashion, to be distinguished from the rest of the world. It is not anything in itself, nor the sign of anything but the folly and vanity of those who rely upon it as their greatest pride and ornament. It takes the firmest hold of weak, flimsy, and narrow minds, of those whose emptiness conceives of nothing excellent but what is thought so by others, and whose self-conceit makes them willing to confine the opinion of all excellence to themselves and those like them. That which is true or beautiful in itself, is not the less so for standing alone. That which is good for anything, is the better for being more widely diffused. But fashion is the abortive issue of vain ostentation and exclusive egotism: it is haughty, trifling, affected, servile, despotic, mean and ambitious, precise and fantastical, all in a breath—tied to no rule, and bound to conform to every whim of the minute.

'The fashion of an hour marks the wearer.' It is a sublimated essence of levity, caprice, vanity, extravagance, idleness, and selfishness. It thinks of nothing but not being contaminated by vulgar use, and winds and doubles like a hare, and betakes itself to the most paltry shifts to avoid being overtaken by the common

hunt that are always in full chase after it. It contrives to keep up its fastidious pretensions, not by the difficulty of the attainment, but by the rapidity and evanescent nature of the changes. It is a sort of conventional badge, or understood passport into select circles, which must still be varying (like the water-mark in bank-notes) not to be counterfeited by those without the pale of fashionable society; for to make the test of admission to all the privileges of that refined and volatile atmosphere depend on any real merit or extraordinary accomplishment, would exclude too many of the pert, the dull, the ignorant, too many shallow, upstart, and self-admiring pretenders, to enable the few that passed muster to keep one another in any tolerable countenance. If it were the fashion, for instance, to be distinguished for virtue, it would be difficult to set or follow the example; but then this would confine the pretension to a small number (not the most fashionable part of the community), and would carry a very singular air with it; or if excellence in any art or science were made the standard of fashion, this would also effectually prevent vulgar imitation, but then it would equally prevent fashionable impertinence. There would be an obscure circle of *vertù* as well as virtue, drawn within the established circle of fashion, a little province of a mighty empire—the example of honesty would spread slowly, and learning would still have to boast of a respectable minority. But of what use would such uncourtly and out-of-the-way accomplishments be to the great and noble, the rich and fair, without any of the *éclat*, the noise and nonsense which belong to that which is followed and admired by all the world alike? The real and solid will never do for the current coin, the common wear and tear of foppery and fashion. It must be the meretricious, the showy, the outwardly fine, and intrinsically worthless—that which lies within the reach of the most indolent affectation, that which can be put on or off at the suggestion of the most wilful caprice, and for which, through all its fluctuations, no mortal reason can be

given, but that it is the newest absurdity in vogue! The shape of a head-dress, whether flat or piled (curl on curl) several stories high by the help of pins and pomatum, the size of a pair of paste buckles, the quantity of gold lace on an embroidered waistcoat, the mode of taking a pinch of snuff, or of pulling out a pocket-handkerchief, the lisping and affected pronunciation of certain words, the saying Mem for Madam, Lord Foppington's *Tam* and *'Paun honour*, with a regular set of visiting phrases and insipid sentiments ready sorted for the day, were what formerly distinguished the mob of fine gentlemen and ladies from the mob of their inferiors. These marks and appendages of gentility had their day, and were then discarded for others equally peremptory and unequivocal. But in all this chopping and changing, it is generally one folly that drives out another; one trifle that by its specific levity acquires a momentary and surprising ascendancy over the last. There is no striking deformity of appearance or behaviour that has not been made 'the outward and visible sign of an inward and invisible grace.' Factitious imperfections are laid hold of to hide real defects. Paint, patches, and powder were at one time synonymous with health, cleanliness, and beauty. Obscenity, irreligion, swearing, drinking, gaming, effeminacy in the one sex and Amazon airs in the other, anything, is the fashion while it lasts. In the reign of Charles II., the profession and practice of every species of extravagance and debauchery were looked upon as the indispensable marks of an accomplished cavalier. Since that period the court has reformed, and has had rather a rustic air. Our belles formerly overloaded themselves with dress, of late years they have affected to go almost naked—'and are, when unadorned, adorned the most.' The women having left off stays, the men have taken to wear them, if we are to believe the authentic Memoirs of the Fudge Family. The Niobe head is at present buried in the *poke* bonnet, and the French milliners and *marchandes des modes* have proved them-

selves an overmatch for the Greek sculptors, in matters of taste and costume.

A very striking change has, however, taken place in dress of late years, and some progress has been made in taste and elegance, from the very circumstance, that as fashion has extended its empire in that direction, it has lost its power. While fashion in dress included what was costly, it was confined to the wealthier classes; even this was an encroachment on the privileges of rank and birth, which for a long time were the only things that commanded or pretended to command respect, and we find Shakspeare complaining that 'the City bears the cost of princes on unworthy shoulders'; but when the appearing in the top of the mode no longer depended on the power of purchasing certain expensive articles of dress, or in the right of wearing them, the rest was so obvious and easy, that any one who chose might cut as coxcombical a figure as the best. It became a matter of mere affectation on the one side, and gradually ceased to be made a matter of aristocratic assumption on the other. 'In the grand carnival of this our age,' among other changes, this is not the least remarkable, that the monstrous pretensions to distinctions in dress have dwindled away by tacit consent, and the simplest and most graceful have been in the same request with all classes. In this respect, as well as some others, 'the age is grown so picked, that the toe of the peasant comes so near the heel of the courtier he galls his kibe'; a lord is hardly to be distinguished in the street from an attorney's clerk; and a plume of feathers is no longer mistaken for the highest distinction in the land! The ideas of natural equality and the Manchester steam-engines together, have, like a double battery, levelled the high towers and artificial structures of fashion in dress, and a white muslin gown is now the common costume of the mistress and the maid, instead of the one wearing, as heretofore, rich silks and satins, and the other coarse linsey-wolsey. It would be ridiculous (on a similar principle) for the courtier to take the wall of the

citizen, having no longer a sword by his side to maintain his right of precedence; and, from the stricter notions that have prevailed of a man's personal merit and identity, a cane dangling from his wrist is the greatest extension of his figure that can be allowed to the modern *petit-maître*.

What shows the worthlessness of mere fashion is, to see how easily this vain and boasted distinction is assumed, when the restraint of decency or circumstances is once removed, by the most uninformed and commonest of the people. I know an undertaker that is the greatest prig in the streets of London, and an Aldermanbury haberdasher that has the most military strut of any lounger in Bond Street or St. James's. We may, at any time, raise a regiment of fops from the same number of fools, who have vanity enough to be intoxicated with the smartness of their appearance, and not sense enough to be ashamed of themselves. Every one remembers the story in *Peregrine Pickle*, of the strolling gipsy that he picked up in spite, had well scoured, and introduced her into genteel company, where she met with great applause, till she got into a passion by seeing a fine lady cheat at cards, rapped out a volley of oaths, and let nature get the better of art. Dress is the great secret of address. Clothes and confidence will set anybody up in the trade of modish accomplishment. Look at the two classes of well-dressed females whom we see at the play-house in the boxes. Both are equally dressed in the height of the fashion, both are *rouged*, and wear their neck and arms bare—both have the same conscious, haughty, theatrical air—the same toss of the head—the same stoop in the shoulders, with all the pride that arises from a systematic disdain of formal prudery—the same pretence and jargon of fashionable conversation—the same mimicry of tones and phrases—the same 'lisping, and ambling, and painting, and nicknaming of God's creatures'; the same everything but real propriety of behaviour and real refinement of sentiment. In all the externals they are as like as the reflection in the

looking-glass. The only difference between the woman of fashion and the woman of pleasure is, that the one *is* what the other only *seems to be*; and yet the victims of dissipation, who thus rival and almost outshine women of the first quality in all the blaze, and pride, and glitter of show and fashion, are, in general, no better than a set of raw, uneducated, inexperienced country girls, or awkward, coarse-fisted servant-maids, who require no other apprenticeship or qualification to be on a level with persons of the highest distinction in society, in all the brilliancy and elegance of outward appearance, than that they have forfeited its common privileges, and every title to its respect. The truth is, that real virtue, beauty, or understanding, are the same, whether 'in a high or low degree'; and the airs and graces of pretended superiority over these which the highest classes give themselves, from mere frivolous and external accomplishments, are easily imitated, with provoking success, by the lowest, whenever they *dare*.

ON NICKNAMES

Hæ nugæ in seria ducunt.

This is a more important subject than it seems at first sight. It is as serious in its results as it is contemptible in the means by which these results are brought about. Nicknames, for the most part, govern the world. The history of politics, of religion, of literature, of morals, and of private life, is too often little less than the history of nicknames. What are one-half the convulsions of the civilised world—the frequent overthrow of states and kingdoms—the shock and hostile encounters of mighty continents—the battles by sea and land—the intestine commotions—the feuds of the Vitelli and Orsini, of the Guelphs and Ghibellines—the civil wars in England and the League in France—the jealousies and heart-burnings of cabinets and councils—the uncharitable proscriptions of creeds and sects, Turk, Jew, Pagan, Papist and Puritan, Quaker, and Methodist—the persecutions and massacres—the burnings, tortures, imprisonments, and lingering deaths, inflicted for a different profession of faith—but so many illustrations of the power of this principle? Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*, and Neale's *History of the Puritans*, are comments on the same text. The fires in Smithfield were fanned by nicknames, and a nickname set its seal on the unopened dungeons of the Holy Inquisition. Nicknames are the talismans and spells that collect and set in motion all the combustible part of men's passions and prejudices, which have hitherto played so much more successful a game, and

done their work so much more effectually than reason, in all the grand concerns and petty details of human life, and do not yet seem tired of the task assigned them. Nicknames are the convenient, portable tools by which they simplify the process of mischief, and get through their job with the least time and trouble. These worthless, unmeaning, irritating, envenomed words of reproach are the established signs by which the different compartments of society are ticketed, labelled, and marked out for each other's hatred and contempt. They are to be had, ready cut and dry, of all sorts and sizes, wholesale and retail, for foreign exportation or for home consumption, and for all occasions in life. 'The priest calls the lawyer a cheat, the lawyer beknaves the divine.' The Frenchman hates the Englishman because he is an Englishman; and the Englishman hates the Frenchman for as good a reason. The Whig hates the Tory, and the Tory the Whig. The Dissenter hates the Church of England man, and the Church of England man hates the Dissenter, as if they were of a different species, because they have a different designation. The Mussulman calls the worshipper of the Cross 'Christian dog,' spits in his face, and kicks him from the pavement, by virtue of a nickname; and the Christian retorts the indignity upon the Infidel and the Jew by the same infallible rule of right. In France they damn Shakspeare in the lump, by calling him a *barbare;* and we talk of Racine's *verbiage* with inexpressible contempt and self-complacency. Among ourselves, an anti-Jacobin critic denounces a Jacobin poet and his friends, at a venture, 'as infidels and fugitives, who have left their wives destitute, and their children fatherless'—whether they have wives and children or not. The unenlightened savage makes a meal of his enemy's flesh, after reproaching him with the name of his tribe, because he is differently tattooed; and the literary cannibal cuts up the character of his opponent by the help of a nickname. The jest of all this is, that a party nickname is always a relative term, and has its countersign, which has just the same force and

meaning, so that both must be perfectly ridiculous and insignificant. A Whig implies a Tory; there must be 'Malcontents' as well as 'Malignants'; Jacobins and anti-Jacobins; English and French. These sorts of *noms-de-guerre* derive all their force from their contraries. Take away the meaning of the one, and you take the sting out of the other. They could not exist but upon the strength of mutual and irreconcilable antipathies; there must be no love lost between them. What is there in the names themselves to give them a preference over each other? 'Sound them, they do become the mouth as well; weigh them, they are as heavy; conjure with them, one will raise a spirit as soon as the other.' If there were not fools and madmen who hated both, there could not be fools and madmen bigoted to either. I have heard an eminent character boast that he had done more to produce the late war by nicknaming Buonaparte 'the Corsican,' than all the state papers and documents on the subject put together. And yet Mr. Southey asks triumphantly, 'Is it to be supposed that it is England, *our* England, to whom that war was owing?' As if, in a dispute between two countries, the conclusive argument, which lies in the pronoun *our*, belonged only to one of them. I like Shakspeare's version of the matter better:—

> Hath Britain all the sun that shines? Day, night,
> Are they not but in Britain? I' the world's volume
> *Our* Britain seems as of it, but not in 't;
> In a great pool a swan's nest, prithee, think
> There's livers out of Britain.

In all national disputes, it is common to appeal to the numbers on your side as decisive on the point. If everybody in England thought the late war right, everybody in France thought it wrong. There were ten millions on one side of the question (or rather of the water), and thirty millions on the other side—that's all. I remember some one arguing, in justification of our Ministers interfering without occasion, 'That governments would not go to war for nothing'; to which I answered: 'Then they could not go to war at

all; for, at that rate, neither of them could be in the wrong, and yet both of them must be in the right. which was absurd.' The only meaning of these vulgar nicknames and party distinctions, where they are urged most violently and confidently, is that others differ from you in some particular or other (whether it be opinion, dress, clime, or complexion), which you highly disapprove of, forgetting that, by the same rule, they have the very same right to be offended at you because you differ from them. Those who have reason on their side do not make the most obstinate and grievous appeals to prejudice and abusive language. I know but of one exception to this general rule, and that is where the things that excite disgust are of such a kind that they cannot well be gone into without offence to decency and good manners; but it is equally certain in this case, that those who are most shocked at the things are not those who are most forward to apply the names. A person will not be fond of repeating a charge, or adverting to a subject, that inflicts a wound on his own feelings, even for the sake of wounding the feelings of another. A man should be very sure that he himself is not what he has always in his mouth. The greatest prudes have been often accounted the greatest hypocrites, and a satirist is at best but a suspicious character. The loudest and most unblushing invectives against vice and debauchery will as often proceed from a desire to inflame and pamper the passions of the writer, by raking into a nauseous subject, as from a wish to excite virtuous indignation against it in the public mind, or to reform the individual. To familiarise the mind to gross ideas is not the way to increase your own or the general repugnance to them. But to return to the subject of nicknames.

The use of this figure of speech is, that it excites a strong idea without requiring any proof. It is a short-hand, compendious mode of getting at a conclusion, and never troubling yourself or anybody else with the formalities of reasoning or the dictates of common

sense. It is superior to all evidence, for it does not rest upon any, and operates with the greatest force and certainty in proportion to the utter want of probability. Belief is only a stray impression, and the malignity or extravagance of the accusation passes for a proof of the crime. 'Brevity is the soul of wit'; and of all eloquence a nickname is the most concise, of all arguments the most unanswerable. It gives *carte-blanche* to the imagination, throws the reins on the neck of the passions, and suspends the use of the understanding altogether. It does not stand upon ceremony, on the nice distinctions of right and wrong. It does not wait the slow processes of reason, or stop to unravel the wit of sophistry. It takes everything for granted that serves for nourishment for the spleen. It is instantaneous in its operations. There is nothing to interpose between the effect and it. It is passion without proof, and action without thought—'the unbought grace of life, the cheap defence of nations.' It does not, as Mr. Burke expresses it, 'leave the will puzzled, undecided, and sceptical in the moment of action.' It is a word and a blow. The 'No Popery' cry raised a little while ago let loose all the lurking spite and prejudice which had lain rankling in the proper receptacles for them for above a century, without any knowledge of the past history of the country which had given rise to them, or any reference to their connection with present circumstances; for the knowledge of the one would have prevented the possibility of their application to the other. Facts present a tangible and definite idea to the mind, a train of causes and consequences, accounting for each other, and leading to a positive conclusion—but no farther. But a nickname is tied down to no such limited service; it is a disposable force, that is almost always perverted to mischief. It clothes itself with all the terrors of uncertain abstraction, and there is no end of the abuse to which it is liable but the cunning of those who employ, or the credulity of those who are gulled by it. It is a reserve of the ignorance, bigotry, and intolerance of weak and vulgar minds, brought up

where reason fails, and always ready, at a moment's warning, to be applied to any, the most absurd purposes. If you bring specific charges against a man, you thereby enable him to meet and repel them, if he thinks it worth his while; but a nickname baffles reply, by the very vagueness of the inferences from it, and gives increased activity to the confused, dim, and imperfect notions of dislike connected with it, from their having no settled ground to rest upon. The mind naturally irritates itself against an unknown object of fear or jealousy, and makes up for the blindness of its zeal by an excess of it. We are eager to indulge our hasty feelings to the utmost, lest, by stopping to examine, we should find that there is no excuse for them. The very consciousness of the injustice we may be doing another makes us only the more loud and bitter in our invectives against him. We keep down the admonitions of returning reason, by calling up a double portion of gratuitous and vulgar spite. The will may be said to act with most force *in vacuo;* the passions are the most ungovernable when they are blindfolded. That malignity is always the most implacable which is accompanied with a sense of weakness, because it is never satisfied of its own success or safety. A nickname carries the weight of the pride, the indolence, the cowardice, the ignorance, and the ill-nature of mankind on its side. It acts by mechanical sympathy on the nerves of society. Any one who is without character himself may make himself master of the reputation of another by the application of a nickname, as, if you do not mind soiling your fingers, you may always throw dirt on another. No matter how undeserved the imputation, it will stick; for, though it is sport to the bystanders to see you bespattered, they will not stop to see you wipe out the stains. You are not heard in your own defence; it has no effect, it does not tell, excites no sensation, or it is only felt as a disappointment of their triumph over you. Their passions and prejudices are inflamed by the charge, 'As rage with rage doth sympathise'; by vindicating yourself, you

merely bring them back to common sense, which is a very sober, mawkish state. *Give a dog an ill name and hang him*, is a proverb. 'A nickname is the heaviest stone that the devil can throw at a man.' It is a bugbear to the imagination, and, though we do not believe in it, it still haunts our apprehensions. Let a nickname be industriously applied to our dearest friend, and let us know that it is ever so false and malicious, yet it will answer its end; it connects the person's name and idea with an ugly association, you think of them with pain together, or it requires an effort of indignation or magnanimity on your part to disconnect them; it becomes an uneasy subject, a sore point, and you will sooner desert your friend, or join in the conspiracy against him, than be constantly forced to repel charges without truth or meaning, and have your penetration or character called in question by a rascal. Nay, such is the unaccountable construction of language and of the human mind, that the affixing the most innocent or praiseworthy appellation to any individual, or set of individuals, *as a nickname*, has all the effect of the most opprobrious epithets. Thus the cant name, 'the Talents,' was successfully applied as a stigma to the Whigs at one time; it held them up to ridicule, and made them obnoxious to public feeling, though it was notorious to everybody that the Whig leaders were 'the Talents,' and that their adversaries nicknamed them so from real hatred and pretended derision. Call a man short by his Christian name, as Tom or Dick such-a-one, or by his profession (however respectable), as Canning pelted a noble lord with his left-off title of Doctor, and you undo him for ever, if he has a reputation to lose. Such is the tenaciousness of spite and ill-nature, or the jealousy of public opinion, even this will be peg enough to hang doubtful inuendos, weighty dilemmas upon. 'With so small a web as this will I catch so great a fly as Cassio.' The public do not like to see their favourites treated with impertinent familiarity; it lowers the tone of admiration very speedily. It implies that some one stands in no great awe of their idol, and

he perhaps may know as much about the matter as they do. It seems as if a man whose name, with some contemptuous abbreviation, is always dinned in the public ear, was distinguished for nothing else. By repeating a man's name in this manner you may soon make him sick of it, and of his life too. Children do not like to be *called out of their names:* it is questioning their personal identity. There are political writers who have fairly worried their readers into conviction by abuse and nicknames. People surrender their judgments to escape the persecution of their style, and the disgust and indignation which their incessant violence and vulgarity excite, at last make you hate those who are the objects of it. *Causa causæ causa causati.* They make people sick of a subject by making them sick of their arguments.

A parrot may be taught to call names; and if the person who keeps the parrot has a spite to his neighbours, he may give them a great deal of annoyance without much wit, either in the employer or the puppet. The insignificance of the instrument has nothing to do with the efficacy of the means. Hotspur would have had 'a *starling* taught to speak nothing but Mortimer,' in the ears of his enemy. Nature, it is said, has given arms to all creatures the most proper to defend themselves, and annoy others: to the lowest she has given the use of nicknames.

There are some droll instances of the effect of proper names combined with circumstances. A young student had come up to London from Cambridge, and went in the evening and planted himself in the pit of the playhouse. He had not been seated long, when in one of the front boxes near him he discovered one of his college tutors, with whom he felt an immediate and strong desire to claim acquaintance, and accordingly called out, in a low and respectful voice, 'Dr. Topping!' The appeal was, however, ineffectual. He then repeated in a louder tone, but still in an under key, so as not to excite the attention of any one but his friend, 'Dr. Topping!' The Doctor took no

notice. He then grew more impatient, and repeated 'Dr. Topping, Dr. Topping!' two or three times pretty loud, to see whether the Doctor did not or would not hear him. Still the Doctor remained immovable. The joke began at length to get round, and one or two persons, as he continued his invocation of the Doctor's name, joined in with him; these were reinforced by others calling out, 'Dr. Topping, Dr. Topping!' on all sides, so that he could no longer avoid perceiving it, and at length the whole pit rose and roared, 'Dr. Topping!' with loud and repeated cries, and the Doctor was forced to retire precipitately, frightened at the sound of his own name.

The calling people by their Christian or surname is a proof of affection, as well as of hatred. They are generally the best of good fellows with whom their friends take this sort of liberty. *Diminutives* are titles of endearment. Dr. Johnson's calling Goldsmith 'Goldy' did equal honour to both. It showed the regard he had for him. This familiarity may perhaps imply a certain want of formal respect; but formal respect is not necessary to, if it is consistent with, cordial friendship. Titles of honour are the reverse of nicknames: they convey the idea of respect, as the others do of contempt, but they equally mean little or nothing. Junius's motto, *Sta nominis umbra*, is a very significant one; it might be extended farther. A striking instance of the force of names, standing by themselves, is in the respect felt towards Michael Angelo in this country. We know nothing of him but his name. It is an abstraction of fame and greatness. Our admiration of him supports itself, and our idea of his superiority seems self-evident, because it is attached to his name only.

ON TASTE[1]

TASTE is nothing but sensibility to the different degrees and kinds of excellence in the works of Art or Nature. This definition will perhaps be disputed; for I am aware the general practice is to make it consist in a disposition to find fault.

A French man or woman will in general conclude their account of Voltaire's denunciation of Shakspeare and Milton as barbarians, on the score of certain technical improprieties, with assuring you that 'he (Voltaire) had a great deal of taste.' It is their phrase, *Il avait beaucoup de goût*. To which the proper answer is, that this may be, but that he did not show it in this case; as the overlooking great and countless beauties, and being taken up only with petty or accidental blemishes, shows as little strength or understanding as it does refinement or elevation of taste. The French author, indeed, allows of Shakspeare, that 'he had found a few pearls on his enormous dunghill.' But there is neither truth nor proportion in this sentence, for his works are (to say the least)—

> Rich with praise
> As is the ooze and bottom of the sea
> With sunken wreck and sumless treasuries.

Genius is the power of producing excellence: taste is the power of perceiving the excellence thus produced in several sorts and degrees, with all their force, refinement, distinctions, and connections. In other words, taste (as it relates to the productions of art) is strictly the power of being properly affected by works of genius.

[1] 1819.

It is the proportioning admiration to power, pleasure to beauty; it is entire sympathy with the finest impulses of the imagination, not antipathy, not indifference to them. The eye of taste may be said to reflect the impressions of real genius, as the even mirror reflects the objects of Nature in all their clearness and lustre, instead of distorting or diminishing them;

> Or, like a gate of steel,
> Fronting the sun, receives and renders back
> His figure and his heat.

To take a pride and pleasure in nothing but defects (and these perhaps of the most paltry, obvious, and mechanical kind)—in the disappointment and tarnishing of our faith in substantial excellence, in the proofs of weakness, not of power (and this where there are endless subjects to feed the mind with wonder and increased delight through years of patient thought and fond remembrance), is not a sign of uncommon refinement, but of unaccountable perversion of taste. So, in the case of Voltaire's hypercriticisms on Milton and Shakspeare, the most commonplace and prejudiced admirer of these authors knows, as well as Voltaire can tell him, that it is a fault to make a seaport (we will say) in Bohemia, or to introduce artillery and gunpowder in the war in heaven. This is common to Voltaire, and the merest English reader: there is nothing in it either way. But what he differs from us in, and, as it is supposed, greatly to his advantage, and to our infinite shame and mortification, is, that this is all that he perceives, or will hear of in Milton or Shakspeare, and that he either knows, or pretends to know, nothing of that prodigal waste, or studied accumulation of grandeur, truth, and beauty, which are to be found in each of these authors. Now, I cannot think that, to be dull and insensible to so great and such various excellence—to have no feeling in unison with it, no latent suspicion of the treasures hid beneath our feet, and which we trample upon with ignorant scorn—to be cut off, as by a judicial blind-

ness, from that universe of thought and imagination that shifts its wondrous pageant before us—to turn aside from the throng and splendour of airy shapes that fancy weaves for our dazzled sight, and to strut and vapour over a little pettifogging blunder in geography or chronology, which a school-boy or village pedagogue would be ashamed to insist upon, is any proof of the utmost perfection of taste, but the contrary. At this rate, it makes no difference whether Shakspeare wrote his works or not, or whether the critic, who 'damns him into everlasting redemption' for a single slip of the pen, ever read them; he is absolved from all knowledge, taste, or feeling, of the different excellences, and inimitable creations of the poet's pen—from any sympathy with the wanderings and the fate of Imogen, the beauty and tenderness of Ophelia, the thoughtful abstraction of Hamlet; his soliloquy on life may never have given him a moment's pause, or touched his breast with one solitary reflection; the Witches in *Macbeth* may 'lay their choppy fingers upon their skinny lips' without making any alteration in his pulse, and Lear's heart may break in vain for him; he may hear no strange noises in Prospero's island, and the moonlight that sleeps on beds of flowers, where fairies couch in the *Midsummer Night's Dream*, may never once have steeped his senses in repose. Nor will it avail Milton to 'have built high towers in heaven,' nor to have brought down heaven upon earth, nor that he has made Satan rear his giant form before us, 'Majestic though in ruin,' or decked the bridal bed of Eve with beauty, or clothed her with innocence, 'likest heaven,' as she ministered to Adam and his Angel-guest. Our critic knows nothing of all this, of beauty or sublimity, of thought or passion, breathed in sweet or solemn sounds, with all the magic of verse 'in tones and numbers fit'; he lays his finger on the map, and shows you that there is no seaport for Shakspeare's weather-beaten travellers to land at in Bohemia, and takes out a list of mechanical inventions, and proves that gunpowder was not known till long after

Milton's 'Battle of the Angels'; and concludes, that every one who, after these profound and important discoveries, finds anything to admire in these two writers, is a person without taste, or any pretensions to it. By the same rule, a thoroughbred critic might prove that Homer was no poet, and the *Odyssey* a vulgar performance, because Ulysses makes a pun on the name of Noman; or some other disciple of the same literal school might easily set aside the whole merit of Racine's *Athalie*, or Molière's *Ecole des Femmes*, and pronounce these *chef-d'œuvres* of art barbarous and Gothic, because the characters in the first address one another (absurdly enough) as *Monsieur* and *Madame*, and because the latter is written in rhyme, contrary to all classical precedent. These little false measures of criticism may be misapplied, and retorted without end, and require to be eked out by national antipathy or political prejudice to give them currency and weight. Thus it was in war time that the author of the *Friend* ventured to lump all the French tragedies together as a smart collection of epigrams, and that the author of the *Excursion*, a poem, being portion[1] of a larger poem, to be named the *Recluse*, made bold to call Voltaire a dull prose writer with impunity. Such pitiful quackery is a cheap way of setting up for exclusive taste and wisdom, by pretending to despise what is most generally admired, as if nothing could come up to or

[1] Why is the word *portion* here used, as if it were a portion of Scripture?

> Those strains that once did sweet in Zion glide,
> He wales a *portion* with judicious care.
> *Cottar's Saturday Night.*

Now, Mr. Wordsworth's poems, though not profane, yet neither are they sacred, to deserve this solemn style, though some of his admirers have gone so far as to compare them, for primitive, patriarchal simplicity, to the historical parts of the Bible. Much has been said of the merits and defects of this large poem, which is 'portion of a larger'; perhaps Horace's rule has been a double bar to its success—*Non satis est pulchra poemata esse, dulcia sunto.* The features of this author's muse want sweetness of expression as well as regularity of outline.

satisfy that ideal standard of excellence, of which the person bears about the select pattern in his own mind. 'Not to admire anything' is as bad a test of wisdom as it is a rule for happiness. We sometimes meet with individuals who have formed their whole character on this maxim, and who ridiculously affect a decided and dogmatical tone of superiority over others, from an uncommon degree both of natural and artificial stupidity. They are blind to painting—deaf to music—indifferent to poetry; and they triumph in the catalogue of their defects as the fault of these arts, because they have not sense enough to perceive their own want of perception. To treat any art or science with contempt, is only to prove your own incapacity and want of taste for it: to say that what has been done best in any kind is good for nothing, is to say that the utmost exertion of human ability is not equal to the lowest, for the productions of the lowest are worth something, except by comparison with what is better. When we hear persons exclaiming that the pictures at the Marquis of Stafford's or Mr. Angerstein's, or those at the British Gallery, are a heap of trash, we might tell them that they betray in this a want, not of taste only, but of common sense, for that these collections contain some of the finest specimens of the greatest masters, and that *that* must be excellent in the productions of human art, beyond which human genius, in any age or country, has not been able to go. Ask these very fastidious critics what it is that they *do* like, and you will soon find, from tracing out the objects of their secret admiration, that their pretended disdain of first-rate excellence is owning either to ignorance of the last refinements of works of genius, or envy at the general admiration which they have called forth. I have known a furious philippic against the faults of shining talents and established reputation subside into complacent admiration of dull mediocrity, that neither tasked the kindred sensibility of its admirer beyond its natural inertness, nor touched his self-love with a consciousness

of inferiority; and that, by never attempting original beauties, and never failing, gave no opportunity to intellectual ingratitude to be plausibly revenged for the pleasure or instruction it had reluctantly received. So there are judges who cannot abide Mr. Kean, and think Mr. Young an incomparable actor, for no other reason than because he never shocks them with an idea which they had not before. The only excuse for the over-delicacy and supercilious indifference here described, is when it arises from an intimate acquaintance with, and intense admiration of, other and higher degrees of perfection and genius. A person whose mind has been worked up to a lofty pitch of enthusiasm in this way cannot, perhaps, condescend to notice, or be much delighted with inferior beauties; but, then, neither will he dwell upon, and be preposterously offended with, slight faults. So that the ultimate and only conclusive proof of taste is, even here, not indifference but enthusiasm; and before a critic can give himself airs of superiority for what he despises, he must first lay himself open to reprisals, by telling us what he admires. There we may fairly join issue with him. Without this indispensable condition of all true taste, absolute stupidity must be more than on a par with the most exquisite refinement; and the most formidable Drawcansir of all would be the most impenetrable blockhead. Thus, if we know that Voltaire's contempt of Shakspeare arose from his idolatry of Racine, this may excuse him in a national point of view; but he has no longer any advantage over us; and we must console ourselves as well as we can for Mr. Wordsworth's not allowing us to laugh at the wit of Voltaire, by laughing now and then at the only author whom he is known to understand and admire![1]

Instead of making a disposition to find fault a proof

[1] A French teacher, in reading *Titus and Berenice* with an English pupil, used to exclaim, in raptures, at the best passages, 'What have you in Shakspeare equal to this?' This showed that he had a taste for Racine, and a power of appreciating his beauties, though he might want an equal taste for Shakspeare.

of taste, I would reverse the rule, and estimate every one's pretensions to taste by the degree of their sensibility to the highest and most various excellence. An indifference to less degrees of excellence is only excusable as it arises from a knowledge and admiration of higher ones; and a readiness in the detection of faults should pass for refinement only as it is owing to a quick sense and impatient love of beauties. In a word, fine taste consists in sympathy, not in antipathy; and the rejection of what is bad is only to be accounted a virtue when it implies a preference of and attachment to what is better.

There is a certain point which may be considered as the highest point of perfection at which the human faculties can arrive in the conception and execution of certain things; to be able to reach this point in reality is the greatest proof of genius and power; and I imagine that the greatest proof of taste is given in being able to appreciate it when done. For instance, I have heard (and I can believe) that Madame Catalani's manner of singing *Hope told a flattering tale* was the perfection of singing; and I cannot conceive that it would have been the perfection of taste to have thought nothing at all of it. There was, I understand, a sort of fluttering of the voice and a breathless palpitation of the heart (like the ruffling of the feathers of the robin-redbreast), which completely gave back all the uneasy and thrilling voluptuousness of the sentiment; and I contend that the person on whom not a particle of this expression was lost (or would have been lost, if it had been even finer), into whom the tones of sweetness or tenderness sink deeper and deeper as they approach the farthest verge of ecstacy or agony, he who has an ear attuned to the trembling harmony, and a heart 'pierceable' by pleasure's finest point, is the best judge of music—not he who remains insensible to the matter himself, or, if you point it out to him, asks, 'What of it?' I fancied that I had a triumph, some time ago, over a critic and a connoisseur in music, who thought little of the minuet in *Don Giovanni;* but the same

person redeemed his pretensions to musical taste, in my opinion, by saying of some passage in Mozart, 'This is a soliloquy equal to any in *Hamlet*.' In hearing the accompaniment in the *Messiah*, of angels' voices to the shepherds keeping watch at night, who has the most taste and delicacy—he who listens in silent rapture to the silver sounds, as they rise in sweetness and soften into distance, drawing the soul from earth to heaven, and making it partake of the music of the spheres—or he who remains deaf to the summons, and remarks that it is an allegorical conceit? Which would Handel have been most pleased with, the man who was seen standing at the performance of the *Coronation Anthem* in Westminster Abbey, with his face bathed in tears, and mingling 'the drops which sacred joy had engendered' with that ocean of circling sound, or with him who sat with frigid, critical aspect, his heart untouched and his looks unaltered as the statues on the wall?[1] Again, if any one, in looking at Rembrandt's picture of *Jacob's Dream*, should not be struck with the solemn awe that surrounds it, and with the dazzling flights of angels' wings, like steps of golden light, emanations of flame or spirit hovering between earth and sky, and should observe very wisely that Jacob was thrown in one corner of the picture like a bundle of clothes, without power, form, or motion, and should think this a defect, I should say that such a critic might possess great knowledge of the mechanical part of painting, but not an atom of feeling or imagination. Or who is it that, looking at the productions of Raphael or Titian, is the person of true

[1] It is a fashion among the scientific, or pedantic part of the musical world, to decry Miss Stephens's singing as feeble and insipid. This it is to take things by their contraries. Her excellence does not lie in force or contrast, but in sweetness and simplicity. To give only one instance. Any person who does not feel the beauty of her singing the lines in *Artaxerxes*, 'What was my pride is now my shame,' etc., in which the notes seem to fall from her lips like languid drops from the bending flower, and her voice flutters and dies away with the expiring conflict of passion in her bosom, may console himself with the possession of other faculties, but assuredly he has no ear for music.

taste, he who finds what there is, or he who finds what there is not, in each? Not he who picks a petty, vulgar quarrel with the colouring of Raphael, or the drawing of Titian, is the true critic and judicious spectator, but he who broods over the expression of the one till it takes possession of his soul, and who dwells on the tones and hues of the other till his eye is saturated with truth and beauty; for by this means he moulds his mind to the study and reception of what is most perfect in form and colour, instead of letting it remain empty, 'swept and garnished,' or rather a dull blank, with 'knowledge at each entrance quite shut out.' He who cavils at the want of drawing in Titian is not the most sensible to it in Raphael; instead of that he only insists on the latter's want of colouring. He who is offended at Raphael's hardness and monotony is not delighted with the soft, rich pencilling of Titian; he only takes care to find fault with him for wanting that which, if he possessed it in the highest degree, he would not admire or understand. And this is easy to be accounted for. First, such a critic has been told what to do, and follows his instructions; secondly, to perceive the height of any excellence, it is necessary to have the most exquisite sense of that kind of excellence through all its gradations: to perceive the want of any excellence, it is merely necessary to have a negative or abstract notion of the thing, or perhaps only of the name; or, in other words, any, the most crude and mechanical idea of a given quality is a measure of positive deficiency, whereas none but the most refined idea of the same quality can be a standard of superlative merit. To distinguish the finest characteristics of Titian or Raphael—to go along with them in their imitation of nature, is to be so far like them—to be occupied only with that in which they fell short of others, instead of that in which they soared above them, shows a vulgar, narrow capacity, insensible to anything beyond mediocrity, and an ambition still more grovelling. To be dazzled by admiration of the greatest excellence, and of the highest works of genius, is

natural to the best capacities and the best natures; envy and dulness are most apt to detect minute blemishes and unavoidable inequalities, as we see the spots in the sun by having its rays blunted by mist or smoke. It may be asked, then, whether mere extravagance and enthusiasm are proofs of taste? And I answer, no; where they are without reason and knowledge. Mere sensibility is not true taste, but sensibility to real excellence is. To admire and be wrapt up in what is trifling or absurd, is a proof of nothing but ignorance or affectation: on the contrary, he who admires most what is most worthy of admiration (let his raptures or his eagerness to express them be what they may), shows himself neither extravagant nor unwise. When Mr. Wordsworth once said that he could read the description of Satan in Milton—

> Nor seem'd
> Less than arch-angel ruin'd, and the excess
> Of glory obscur'd—

till he felt a certain faintness come over his mind from a sense of beauty and grandeur, I saw no extravagance in this, but the utmost truth of feeling. When the same author, or his friend Mr. Southey, says, that the *Excursion* is better worth preserving than the *Paradise Lost*, this appears to me a great piece of impertinence, or an unwarrantable stretch of friendship.

The highest taste is shown in habitual sensibility to the greatest beauties; the most general taste is shown in a perception of the greatest variety of excellence. Many people admire Milton, and as many admire Pope, while there are but few who have any relish for both. Almost all the disputes on this subject arise, not so much from false as from confined taste. We suppose that only one thing can have merit; and that, if we allow it to anything else, we deprive the favourite object of our critical faith of the honours due to it. We are generally right in what we approve ourselves, for liking proceeds from a certain conformity of objects to the taste; as we are generally wrong in condemning what others admire, for our dislike mostly proceeds

from a want of taste for what pleases them. Our being totally senseless to what excites extreme delight in those who have as good a right to judge as we have, in all human probability, implies a defect of faculty in us rather than a limitation in the resources of nature or art. Those who are pleased with the fewest things, know the least; as those who are pleased with everything, know nothing. Shakspeare makes Mrs. Quickly say of Falstaff, by a pleasant blunder, that 'A' could never abide carnation.' So there are persons who cannot like Claude, because he is not Salvator Rosa; some who cannot endure Rembrandt, and others who would not cross the street to see a Vandyke; one reader does not like the neatness of Junius, and another objects to the extravagance of Burke; and they are all right, if they expect to find in others what is only to be found in their favourite author or artist, but equally wrong if they mean to say that each of those they would condemn by a narrow and arbitrary standard of taste, has not a peculiar and transcendent merit of his own. The question is not whether *you* like a certain excellence (it is your own fault if you do not), but whether another possessed it in a very eminent degree. If he did not, who is there that possessed it in a greater— that ranks above him in that particular? Those who are accounted the best, are the best in their line. When we say that Rembrandt was a master of *chiaro-scuro*, for instance, we do not say that he joined to this the symmetry of the Greek statues, but we mean that we must go to him for the perfection of *chiaro-scuro*, and that a Greek statue has not *chiaro-scuro*. If any one objects to Junius's *Letters*, that they are a tissue of epigrams, we answer, be it so; it is for that very reason that we admire them. Again, should any one find fault with Mr. Burke's writings as a collection of rhapsodies, the proper answer always would be, 'Who is there that has written finer rhapsodies?' I know an admirer of *Don Quixote* who can see no merit in *Gil Blas*, and an admirer of *Gil Blas* who could never get through *Don Quixote*. I myself have great pleasure in

reading both these works, and in that respect think I have an advantage over both these critics. It always struck me as a singular proof of good taste, good sense, and liberal thinking, in an old friend, who had Paine's *Rights of Man* and Burke's *Reflections on the French Revolution* bound up in one volume, and who said, that, both together, they made a very good book. To agree with the greatest number of sound judges is to be in the right, and sound judges are persons of natural sensibility and acquired knowledge.[1] On the other hand, it must be owned, there are critics whose praise is a libel, and whose recommendation of any work is enough to condemn it. Men of the greatest genius are not always persons of the most liberal and unprejudiced taste. They have a strong bias to certain qualities themselves, are for reducing others to their own standard, and lie less open to the general impressions of things. This exclusive preference of their own peculiar excellences to those of others, in writers whose merits have not been sufficiently understood or acknowledged by their contemporaries, chiefly because they were *not* commonplace, may sometimes be seen mounting up to a degree of bigotry and intolerance, little short of insanity. There are some critics I have known who never allow an author any merit till all the world 'cry out upon him,' and others who never allow another any merit that any one can discover but themselves. If there are connoisseurs who spend their lives and waste their breath in extolling sublime passages in obscure writers, and lovers who choose their mistresses for their ugly faces, this is not taste but affectation. What is popular is not necessarily vulgar; and that which we try to rescue from fatal obscurity, had in general much better remain where it is.

[1] I apprehend that natural is of more importance than acquired sensibility. Thus, any one, without having been at an opera, may judge of opera dancing, only from having seen (with judicious eyes) a stag bound across a lawn, or a tree wave its branches in the air. In all, the general principles of motion are the same.

Taste relates to that which, either in the objects of nature or the imitation of them, or the Fine Arts in general, is calculated to give pleasure. Now, to know what is calculated to give pleasure, the way is to inquire what does give pleasure: so that taste is, after all, much more a matter of fact and less of theory than might be imagined. We may hence determine another point, viz.—whether there is any universal or exclusive standard of taste, since this is to inquire, in other words, whether there is any one thing that pleases all the world alike, or whether there is only one thing that pleases anybody, both which questions carry their own answers with them. Still it does not follow, because there is no dogmatic or bigoted standard of taste, like a formula of faith, which whoever does not believe without doubt he shall be damned everlastingly, that there is no standard of taste whatever, that is to say, that certain things are not more apt to please than others, that some do not please more generally, that there are not others that give most pleasure to those who have studied the subject, that one nation is most susceptible of a particular kind of beauty, and another of another, according to their characters, etc. It would be a difficult attempt to force all these into one general rule or system, and yet equally so to deny that they are absolutely capricious, and without any foundation or principle whatever. There are, doubtless, books for children that we discard as we grow up; yet, what are the majority of mankind, or even readers, but grown children? If put to the vote of all the milliners' girls in London, *Old Mortality*, or even *Heart of Mid-Lothian*, would not carry the day (or, at least, not very triumphantly) over a common Minerva-press novel; and I will hazard another opinion, that no women ever liked Burke. Mr Pratt, on the contrary, said that he had to 'boast of many learned and beautiful suffrages.'[1] It is not, then, solely from the greatest number of voices, but from the opinion of the greatest number of well-informed

[1] In answer to a criticism by Mr. Godwin on his poem called *Sympathy*.

minds, that we can establish, if not an absolute standard, at least a comparative scale, of taste. Certainly, it can hardly be doubted that the greater the number of persons of strong natural sensibility or love for any art, and who have paid the closest attention to it, who agree in their admiration of any work of art, the higher do its pretensions rise to classical taste and intrinsic beauty. In this way, as the opinion of a thousand good judges may outweigh that of nearly all the rest of the world, so there may be one individual among them whose opinion may outweigh that of the other nine hundred and ninety-nine; that is, one of a still stronger and more refined perception of beauty than all the rest, and to whose opinion that of the others and of the world at large would approximate and be conformed, as their taste or perception of what was pleasing became stronger and more confirmed by exercise and proper objects to call it forth. Thus, if we were still to insist on an universal standard of taste, it must be that, not which *does*, but which *would* please universally, supposing all men to have paid an equal attention to any subject and to have an equal relish for it, which can only be guessed at by the imperfect and yet more than casual agreement among those who have done so from choice and feeling. Taste is nothing but an enlarged capacity for receiving pleasure from works of imagination, etc. It is time, however, to apply this rule. There is, for instance, a much greater number of habitual readers and play-goers in France, who are devoted admirers of Racine or Molière, than there are in England of Shakspeare: does Shakspeare's fame rest, then, on a less broad and solid foundation than that of either of the others? I think not, supposing that the class of judges to whom Shakspeare's excellences appeal are a higher, more independent, and more original court of criticism, and that their suffrages are quite as unanimous (though not so numerous) in the one case as in the other. A simile or a sentiment is not the worse in common opinion for being somewhat superficial and hackneyed, but it is the worse in poetry.

The perfection of *commonplace* is that which would unite the greatest number of suffrages, if there were not a tribunal above *commonplace*. For instance, in Shakspeare's description of flowers, primroses are mentioned—

> That come before the swallow dares, and take
> The winds of March with beauty :[1]

Now, I do not know that this expression is translatable into French, or intelligible to the common reader of either nation, but raise the scale of fancy, passion, and observation of nature to a certain point, and I will be bold to say that there will be no scruple entertained whether this single metaphor does not contain more poetry of the kind than is to be found in all Racine. As no Frenchman could write it, so I believe no Frenchman can understand it. We cannot take this insensibility on their part as a mark of our superiority, for we have plenty of persons among ourselves in the same predicament, but not the wisest or most refined, and to these the appeal is fair from the many—'and fit audience find, though few.' So I think it requires a higher degree of taste to judge of Titian's portraits than Raphael's scripture pieces: not that I think more highly of the former than the latter, but the world and connoisseurs in general think there is no comparison (from the dignity of the subject), whereas I think it difficult to decide which are the finest. Here again we have a commonplace, a preconception, the moulds of the judgment preoccupied by certain assumptions of degrees and classes of excellence, instead of judging from the true and genuine impressions of things. Men of genius, or those who can produce excellence, would be the best judges of it—poets of poetry, painters of painting, etc.—but that persons of original and strong powers of mind are too much disposed to refer everything to their own peculiar bias, and are comparatively indifferent to merely passive impressions. On the other hand, it is wholly wrong to oppose taste to

[1] *Winter's Tale*, iv. 3, edit. 1868, iii. 469.

genius, for genius in works of art is nothing but the power of producing what is beautiful (which, however, implies the intimate sense of it), though this is something very different from mere negative or formal beauties, which have as little to do with taste as genius.

I have, in a former essay, ascertained one principle of taste or excellence in the arts of imitation, where it was shown that objects of sense are not as it were simple and self-evident propositions, but admit of endless analysis and the most subtle investigation. We do not see nature with our eyes, but with our understandings and our hearts. To suppose that we see the whole of any object, merely by looking at it, is a vulgar error: we fancy that we do, because we are, of course, conscious of no more than we see in it, but this circle of our knowledge enlarges with further acquaintance and study, and we then perceive that what we perhaps barely distinguished in the gross, or regarded as a dull blank, is full of beauty, meaning, and curious details. He sees most of nature who understands its language best, or connects one thing with the greatest number of other things. Expression is the key to the human countenance, and unfolds a thousand imperceptible distinctions. How, then, should every one be a judge of pictures, when so few are of faces? A merely ignorant spectator, walking through a gallery of pictures, no more distinguishes the finest than your dog would, if he was to accompany you. Do not even the most experienced dispute on the preference, and shall the most ignorant decide? A vulgar connoisseur would even prefer a Denner to a Titian, because there is more of merely curious and specific detail. We may hence account for another circumstance, why things please in the imitation which do not in reality. If we saw the whole of anything, or if the object in nature were merely one thing, this could not be the case. But the fact is, that in the imitation, or in the scientific study of any object, we come to an analysis of the details or some other

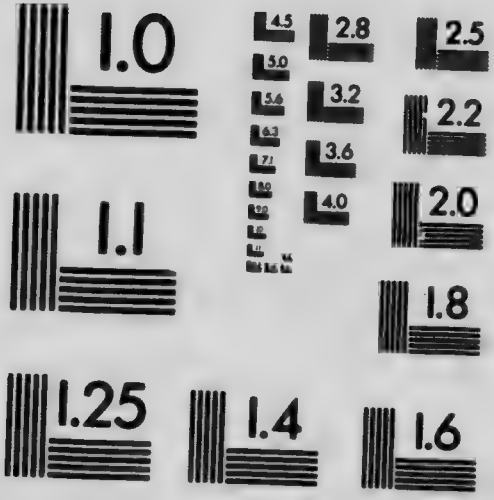
abstract view of the subject which we had overlooked in a cursory examination, and these may be beautiful or curious, though the object in the gross is disgusting, or connected with disagreeable or uninteresting associations. Thus, in a picture of *still life*, as a shell or a marble chimney-piece, the stains or the gradations of colour may be delicate, and subjects for a new and careful imitation, though the *tout ensemble* has not, like a living face, the highest beauty of intelligence and expression. Here lie and here return the true effects and triumphs of art. It is not in making the eye a microscope, but in making it the interpreter and organ of all that can touch the soul and the affections, that the perfection of fine art is shown. Taste, then, does not place in the first rank of merit what merely proves difficulty or gratifies curiosity, unless it is combined with excellence and sentiment, or the pleasures of imagination and the moral sense. In this case the pleasure is more than doubled, where not only the imitation at the thing imitated, is fine in itself. Hence the preference given to Italian over Dutch pictures.

In respect to the imitation of nature, I would further observe that I think Sir Joshua Reynolds was wrong in making the grandeur of the design depend on the omission of the details, or the want of finishing. This seems also to proceed on the supposition that there cannot be two views of nature, but that the details are opposed to and inconsistent with an attention to general effect. Now this is evidently false, since the two things are undoubtedly combined by nature. For instance, the grandeur of design or character in the arch of an eyebrow is not injured or destroyed in reality by the hair-lines of which it is composed. Nor is the general form or outline of the eyebrow altered in the imitation, whether you make it one rude mass or descend into the minutiæ of the parts, which are arranged in such a manner as to produce the arched form and give the particular expression. So the general form of a nose, say an aquiline one, is not



MICROCOPY RESOLUTION TEST CHART

(ANSI and 'SO TEST CHART No. 2)



APPLIED IMAGE Inc

1653 East Main Street
Rochester, New York 14609 USA
(716) 482 - 0300 - Phone
(716) 288 - 5989 - Fax

affected, whether I paint a wart which may happen to be on it or not, and so of the outline and proportions of the whole face. That is, general effect is consistent with individual details, and though these are not necessary to it, yet they often assist it, and always confirm the sense of verisimilitude. The most finished paintings, it is true, are not the grandest in effect; but neither is it true that the greatest daubs are the most sublime in character and composition. The best painters have combined an eye to the whole with careful finishing, and as there is a medium in all things, so the rule here seems to be not to go on *ad infinitum* with the details, but to stop when the time and labour necessary seem, in the judgment of the artist, to exceed the benefit produced.

Beauty does not consist in a medium, but in gradation or harmony. It has been the fashion of late to pretend to refer everything to association of ideas (and it is difficult to answer this appeal, since association, by its nature, mixes up with everything), but as Hartley has himself observed, who carried this principle to the utmost extent, and might be supposed to understand its limits, association implies something to be associated, and if there is a pleasing association, there must be first something naturally pleasing from which the secondary satisfaction is reflected, or to which it is conjoined. The chirping of a sparrow is as much a rural and domestic sound as the notes of the robin or the thrush, but it does not serve as a point to link other interests to because it wants beauty in itself; and, on the other hand, the song of the nightingale draws more attention to itself as a piece of music, and conveys less sentiment than the simple note of the cuckoo, which, from its solitary singularity, acts as the warning voice of time. Those who deny that there is a natural and pleasing softness arising from harmony or gradation, might as well affirm that sudden and abrupt transitions do not make our impressions more distinct as that they do not make them more harsh and violent. Beauty consists in gradation of colours or symmetry of form

(conformity): strength or sublimity arises from the sense of power, and is aided by contrast. The ludicrous is the incoherent, arising, not from a conflicting power, but from weakness or the inability of any habitual impulse to sustain itself. The *ideal* is not confined to creation, but takes place in imitation, where a thing is subjected to one view, as all the parts of a face to the same expression. Invention is only feigning according to nature, or with a certain proportion between causes and effects. Poetry is infusing the same spirit into a number of things, or bathing them all, as it were, in the same overflowing sense of delight (making the language also soft and musical), as the same torch kindles a number of lamps. I think invention is chiefly confined to poetry and words or ideas, and has little place in painting or concrete imagery, where the want of truth, or of the actual object, soon spoils the effect and force of the representation. Indeed, I think all genius is, in a great measure, national and local, arising out of times and circumstances, and being sustained at its full height by these alone, and that originality is not a deviation from, but a recurrence to nature. Rules and models destroy genius and art; and the access of the artificial in the end cures itself, for it in time becomes so uniform and vapid as to be altogether contemptible, and to seek *perforce* some other outlet or purchase for the mind to take hold of.

The metaphysical theory above premised will account not only for the difficulty of imitating nature, but for the excellence of various masters, and the diversity and popularity of different styles. If the truth of sense and nature were one, there could be but one mode of representing it, more or less correct. But nature contains an infinite variety of parts, with their relations and significations, and different artists take these, and all together do not give the whole. Thus Titian coloured, Raphael designed, Rubens gave the florid hue and motions, Rembrandt *chiaro-scuro*, etc.; but none of these reached perfection in their several departments, much less with reference to the whole

circumference of art. It is ridiculous to suppose there is but one standard or one style. One artist looks at objects with as different an eye from another, as he does from the mathematician. It is erroneous to tie down individual genius to ideal models. Each person should do that, not which is best in itself, even supposing this could be known, but that which he can do best, which he will find out if left to himself. Spenser could not have written *Paradise Lost*, nor Milton the *Faërie Queene*. Those who aim at faultless regularity will only produce mediocrity, and no one ever approaches perfection except by stealth, and unknown to themselves. Did Correggio know what he had done when he had painted the 'St. Jerome'—or Rembrandt when he made the sketch of 'Jacob's Dream'? Oh, no! Those who are conscious of their powers never do anything.

WHY THE HEROES OF ROMANCES ARE INSIPID

Because it is taken for granted that they must be amiable and interesting in the first instance, which, like other things that are taken for granted, is but indifferently, or indeed cannot be, made out at all in the sequel. To put it to the proof, to give illustrations of it, would be to throw a doubt upon the question. They have only to show themselves to ensure conquest. Indeed, the reputation of their victories goes before them, and is a pledge of their success before they even appear. They are, or are supposed to be, so amiable, so handsome, so accomplished, so captivating, that all hearts bow before them, and all the women are in love with them without knowing why or wherefore, except that it is understood that they are to be so. All obstacles vanish without a finger lifted or a word spoken, and the effect is produced without a blow being struck. When there is this imaginary charm at work, everything they could do or say must weaken the impression, like arguments brought in favour of a self-evident truth; they very wisely say or do little or nothing, rely on their names and the author's good word, look, smile, and are adored; but to all but the heroines of romance and their confidantes, are exceedingly uninteresting and *commonplace* personages, either great coxcombs or wonderfully insipid. When a lover is able to look unutterable things which produce the desired effect, what occasion for him to exert his eloquence or make an impassioned speech, in order to

bring about a revolution in his favour, which is already accomplished by other less doubtful means? When the impression at first sight is complete and irresistible, why throw away any farther thoughts or words to make it more so? This were 'to gild refined gold, to paint the lily, to smooth the ice, to throw a perfume on the violet, or add another hue unto the rainbow, or seek with taper-light the beauteous eye of Heaven to garnish,' which has been pronounced to be 'wasteful and superfluous excess.' Authors and novel-writers therefore reserve for their second-rate and less prominent characters, the artillery of words, the arts of persuasion, and all the unavailing battery of hopeless attentions and fine sentiment, which are of no use to the more accomplished gallant, who makes his triumphant approaches by stolen glances and breathing sighs, and whose appearance alone supersedes the disclosure of all his other implied perfections and an importunate display of a long list of titles to the favour of the fair, which, as they are not insisted on, it would be vain and unbecoming to produce to the gaze of the world, or for the edification of the curious reader. It is quite enough if the lady is satisfied with her choice, and if (as generally happens both as a cause and consequence in such cases) the gentleman is satisfied with himself. If he indeed seemed to entertain a doubt upon the subject, the spell of his fascination would be broken, and the author would be obliged to derogate from the *beau ideal* of his character, and make him do something to deserve the good opinion that might be entertained of him, and to which he himself had not led the way by boundless self-complacency and the conscious assurance of infallible success.

Another circumstance that keeps our novel heroes in the background is, that if there was any doubt of their success, or they were obliged to employ the ordinary and vulgar means to establish their superiority over every one else, they would be no longer those 'faultless monsters' which it is understood that they must be to fill their part in the drama. The discarded or

despairing, not the favoured lovers, are unavoidably the most interesting persons in the story. In fact, the principals are already disposed of in the first page; they are destined for each other by an unaccountable and uncontrollable sympathy: the ceremony is in a manner over, and they are already married people, with all the lawful attributes and indifference belonging to the character. To produce an interest, there must be mixed motives, alternate hope and fear, difficulties to struggle with, sacrifices to make; but the true hero of romance is too fine a gentleman to be subjected to this rude ideal or mortifying exposure, which devolves upon some much more unworthy and unpretending personage. The beauty of the outline must not be disturbed by the painful conflicts of passion or the strong contrast of light and shade. The taste of the heroic cannot swerve for a moment from the object of its previous choice, who must never be placed in disadvantageous circumstances. The top characters occupy a certain prescriptive rank in the world of romance, by the rules of etiquette and laws of this sort of fictitious composition, reign like princes, and have only to do nothing to forfeit their privileges or compromise their supposed dignity.

The heroes of the old romances, the Grand Cyruses, the Artamenes, and Oroondates, are in this respect better than the moderns. They had their steel helmet and plume of feathers, the glittering spear and shield, the barbed steed, and the spread banner, and had knightly service to perform in joust and tournament, in the field of battle or the deep forest, besides the duty which they owed to their 'mistress' eyebrow,' and the favours they received at her hands. They were comparatively picturesque and adventurous personages, and men of action in the tented field, and lost all title to the smile of beauty if they did not deserve it by feats of prowess, and by the valour of their arms. However insipid they might be as accepted lovers, in their set speeches and improgressive languishments by which they paid their court to their hearts' idols, the

'fairest of the fair,' yet in their character of warriors and heroes, they were men of mettle, and had something in them. They did not merely sigh and smile and kneel in the presence of their mistresses—they had to unhorse their adversaries in combat, to storm castles, to vanquish giants, and lead armies. So far, so well. In the good old times of chivalry and romance, favour was won and maintained by the bold achievements and fair fame of the chosen knight, which keeps up a show of suspense and dramatic interest instead of depending, as in more effeminate times, on taste, sympathy, and a refinement of sentiment and manners, of the delicacy of which it is impossible to convey any idea by words or actions. Even in the pompous and affected courtship of the romances of the seventeenth century (now, alas! exploded), the interviews between the lovers are so rare and guarded, their union, though agreed upon and inevitable, is so remote, the smile with which the lady regards her sworn champion, though as steady as that of one of the fixed stars, is like them so cold, as to give a tone of passion and interest to their enamoured flights as though they were affected by the chances and changes of sublunary affairs. I confess I have read some of these fabulous folios formerly with no small degree of delight and breathless anxiety, particularly that of *Cassandra*; and would willingly indeed go over it again to catch even a faint, a momentary glimpse of the pleasure with which I used at one period to peruse its prolix descriptions and high-flown sentiments. Not only the Palmerins of England and Amadises of Gaul, who made their way to their mistresses' hearts by slaying giants and taming dragons, but the heroes of the French romances of intrigue and gallantry which succeeded those of necromancy and chivalry, and where the adventurers for the prize have to break through the fences of morality and scruples of conscience instead of stone walls and enchantments dire, are to be excepted from the censure of downright insipidity, which attaches to those ordinary drawing-room heroes, who are installed in the good graces of their divinities by a look, and keep their

places there by the force of *still life!* It is Gray who cries out, 'Be mine to read eternal new romances of Marivaux and Crebillon!' I could say the same of those of Madame La Fayette and the Duke de la Rochefoucault. *The Princess of Cleves* is a most charming work of this kind; and the *Duc de Nemours* is a great favourite with me. He is perhaps the most brilliant personage that ever entered upon the *tapis* of a drawing-room, or trifled at a lady's toilette.

I prefer him, I own, vastly to Richardson's *Sir Charles Grandison*, whom I look upon as the prince of coxcombs; and so much the more impertinent as he is a moral one. His character appears to me 'ugly all over with affectation.' There is not a single thing that Sir Charles Grandison does or says all through the book from liking to any person or object but himself, and with a view to answer to a certain standard of perfection for which he pragmatically sets up. He is always thinking of himself, and trying to show that he is the wisest, happiest, and most virtuous person in the whole world. He is (or would be thought) a code of Christian ethics—a compilation and abstract of all gentlemanly accomplishments. There is nothing, I conceive, that excites so little sympathy as this inordinate egotism; or so much disgust as this everlasting self-complacency. Yet his self-admiration, brought forward on every occasion as the incentive to every action and reflected from all around him, is the burden and pivot of the story. 'Is not the man Sir Charles Grandison?' is what he and all the other persons concerned are continually repeating to themselves. His preference of the little, insignificant, selfish, affected, puritanical Miss Byron, who is remarkable for nothing but her conceit of herself and her lover, to the noble Clementina, must for ever stamp him for the poltroon and blockhead that he was. What a contrast between these two females—the one, the favourite heroine, settling her idle punctilios and the choice of her ribbons for the wedding-day with equal interest, the other, self-devoted, broken-hearted, generous, disinterested, pouring out her whole soul in the fervent

expressions and dying struggles of an unfortunate and hopeless affection! It was impossible indeed for the genius of the author (strive all he could) to put the pettiness and coquettish scruples of the bride elect upon a par with the eloquent despair and impassioned sentiments of her majestic but unsuccessful rival. Nothing can show more clearly that the height of good fortune, and of that conventional faultlessness which is supposed to secure it, is incompatible with any great degree of interest. Lady Clementina should have been married to Sir Charles to surfeit her of a coxcomb—Miss Byron to Lovelace to plague her with a rake! Have we not sometimes seen such matches? A slashing critic of my acquaintance once observed, that 'Richardson would be surprised in the next world to find Lovelace in Heaven and Grandison in Hell!' Without going this orthodox length, I must say there is something in Lovelace's vices more attractive than in the other's best virtues. Clarissa's attachment seems as natural as Clementina's is romantic. There is a *regality* about Lovelace's manner, and he appears clothed in a panoply of wit, gaiety, spirit, and enterprise that is criticism-proof. If he had not possessed these dazzling qualities, nothing could have made us forgive for an instant his treatment of the spotless Clarissa; but indeed they might be said to be mutually attracted to and extinguished in each other's dazzling lustre! When we think of Lovelace and his luckless exploits, we can hardly be persuaded at this time of day that he wore a wig. Yet that he did so is evident; for Miss Howe, when she gave him that spirited box on the ear, struck the powder out of it! Mr. B. in *Pamela* has all the insipidity that arises from patronising beauty and condescending to virtue. Pamela herself is delightfully made out; but she labours under considerable disadvantages, and is far from a *regular* heroine.

Sterne (thank God!) has neither hero nor heroine, and he does very well without them.

Many people find faults with Fielding's *Tom Jones* as gross and immoral. For my part I have doubts of his

being so very handsome, from the author's always talking about his beauty, and I suspect he was a clown, from being constantly assured he was so very genteel. Otherwise, I think Jones acquits himself very well both in his actions and speeches, as a lover and as a *trencher man*, whenever he is called upon. Some persons, from their antipathy to that headlong impulse, of which Jones was the slave, and to that morality of good-nature which in him is made a foil to principle, have gone so far as to prefer Blifil as the *prettier fellow* of the two. I certainly cannot subscribe to this opinion, which perhaps was never meant to have followers, and has nothing but its singularity to commend it. Joseph Andrews is a hero of the shoulder-knot: it would be hard to canvass his pretensions too severely, especially considering what a patron he has in Parson Adams. That one character would cut up into a hundred fine gentlemen and novel heroes! Booth is another of the good-natured tribe, a fine man, a very fine man! But there is a want of spirit to animate the well-meaning man. He hardly deserved to have the hashed mutton kept waiting for him. The author has redeemed himself in Amelia; but a heroine with a *broken nose*, and who was a married woman besides, must be rendered truly interesting and amiable to make up for superficial objections. The character of the Nobleman in this novel is *not* insipid. If Fielding could have made virtue as admirable as he could make vice detestable, he would have been a greater master even than he was. I do not understand what those critics mean who say he got all his characters out of [illegible]-houses. It is true he did some of them.

Smollett's heroes are neither one thing nor the other; neither very refined nor insipid. Wilson in *Humphrey Clinker* comes the nearest to the *beau ideal* of this character, the favourite of the novel-reading and boarding-school girl. Narcissa and Emilia Gauntlet are very charming girls; and Monimia in *Count Fathom* is a fine monumental beauty. But perhaps he must be allowed to be most *at home* in Winifred Jenkins

The women have taken this matter up in our own time: let us see what they have made of it. Mrs. Radcliffe's heroes and lovers are perfect in their kind; nobody can find any fault with them, for nobody knows anything about them. They are described as very handsome, and quite unmeaning and inoffensive.

Her heroes have no character at all.

Theodore, Valancourt,—what delightful names! and there is nothing else to distinguish them by. Perhaps, however, this indefiniteness is an advantage. We add expression to the inanimate outline, and fill up the blank with all that is amiable, interesting, and romantic. A long ride without a word spoken, a meeting that comes to nothing, a parting look, a moonlight scene, or evening skies that paint their sentiments for them better than the lovers can do for themselves, farewells too full of anguish, deliverances too big with joy to admit of words, suppressed sighs, faint smiles, the freshness of the morning, pale melancholy, the clash of swords, the clank of chains that make the fair one's heart sink within her, these are the chief means by which the admired authoress of the *Romance of the Forest* and the *Mysteries of Udolpho* keeps alive an ambiguous interest in the bosom of her fastidious readers, and elevates the lover into the hero of the fable. Unintelligible distinctions, impossible attempts, a delicacy that shrinks from the most trifling objection, and an enthusiasm that rushes on its fate, such are the charming and teasing contradictions that form the flimsy texture of a modern romance! If the lover in such critical cases was anything but a lover, he would cease to be the most amiable of all characters in the abstract and by way of excellence, and would be a traitor to the cause; to give reasons or to descend to particulars, is to doubt the omnipotence of love and shake the empire of credulous fancy; a sounding name, a graceful form, are all that is necessary to suspend the whole train of tears, sighs, and the softest emotions upon; the ethereal

nature of the passion requires ethereal food to sustain it; and our youthful hero, in order to be perfectly interesting, must be drawn as perfectly insipid!

I cannot, however, apply this charge to Mrs. Inchbald's heroes or heroines. However finely drawn, they are an essence of sentiment. Their words are composed of the warmest breath, their tears scald, their sighs stifle. Her characters seem moulded of softer clay, the work of fairest hands. Miss Milner is enchanting. Doriforth indeed is severe, and has a very stately opinion of himself, but he has spirit and passion. Lord Norwynne is the most unpleasant and obdurate. He seduces by his situation and kills by indifference, as is natural in such cases. But still through all these the fascination of the writer's personal feelings never quits you. On the other hand, Miss Burney's (Madame D'Arblay's) *forte* is ridicule, or an exquisite tact for minute absurdities; when she aims at being fine, she only becomes affected. No one had ever much less of the romantic. Lord Orville is a condescending suit of clothes; yet, certainly, the sense which Evelina has of the honour done her is very prettily managed. Sir Clement Willoughby is a much gayer and more animated person, though his wit outruns his discretion. Young Delville is the hero of punctilio—a perfect diplomatist in the art of love-making—and draws his parallels and sits down as deliberately before the citadel of his mistress' heart, as a cautious general lays siege to an impregnable fortress. Cecilia is not behindhand with him in the game of studied cross-purposes and affected delays, and is almost the veriest and most provoking trifler on record. Miss Edgeworth, I believe, has no heroes. Her *trenchant* pen cuts away all extravagance and idle pretence, and leaves nothing but common sense, prudence, and propriety behind it, wherever it comes.

I do not apprehend that the heroes of the author of *Waverley* form any very striking exception to the common rule. They conform to their designation

and follow the general law of their being. They are, for the most part, very equivocal and undecided personages, who receive their governing impulse from accident, or are puppets in the hands of their mistresses, such as Ivanhoe, Frank Osbaldistone, Henry Morton, etc. I do not say that any of these are absolutely insipid, but they have in themselves no leading or master-traits, and they are worked out of very listless and inert materials, into a degree of force and prominence, solely by the genius of the author. Instead of acting, they are acted upon, and keep in the background and in a neutral posture, till they are absolutely forced to come forward, and it is then with a very amiable reservation of modest scruples. Does it not seem almost, or generally speaking, as if a character, to be put in this responsible situation of candidate for the highest favour of the public at large, or of the fair in particular, who is to conciliate all suffrages and concentrate all interests, must really have nothing in him to please or give offence, that he must be left a negative, feeble character, without untractable or uncompromising points, and with a few slight recommendations and obvious good qualities, which every one may be supposed to improve upon and fill up according to his or her inclination or fancy and the model of perfection previously existing in the mind? It is a privilege claimed, no doubt, by the fair reader to make out the object of her admiration and interest according to her own choice; and the same privilege, if not openly claimed, may be covertly exercised by others. We are all fond of our own creations; and if the author does little to his chief character, and allows us to have a considerable hand in it, it may not suffer in our opinion from this circumstance. In fact, the hero of the work is not so properly the chief object in it, as a sort of blank left open to the imagination, or a lay-figure on which the reader disposes whatever drapery he pleases! Of all Sir Walter's male characters the most dashing and spirited is the Sultan Saladin. But he is not meant for a hero, nor fated

to be a lover. He is a collateral and incidental performer in the scene. His movements therefore remain free, and he is master of his own resplendent energies, which produce so much the more daring and felicitous an effect. So far from being intended to please all tastes, or the most squeamish, he is not meant for any taste. He has no pretensions, and stands upon the sole ground of his own heroic acts and sayings. The author has none of the timidity or mawkishness arising from a fear of not coming up to his own professions, or to the expectations excited in the reader's mind. Any striking trait, any interesting exploit, is more than was bargained for—is heaped measure, running over. There is no idle, nervous apprehension of falling short of perfection, arresting the hand or diverting the mind from truth and nature. If the Pagan is not represented as a monster and barbarian, all the rest is a godsend. Accordingly all is spontaneous, bold, and original in this beautiful and glowing design, which is as magnificent as it is magnanimous.—Lest I should forget it, I will mention, while I am on the subject of Scotch novels, that Mackenzie's *Man of Feeling* is not without interest, but it is an interest brought out in a very singular and unprecedented way. He not merely says or does nothing to deserve the approbation of the goddess of his idolatry, but from extreme shyness and sensitiveness, instead of presuming on his merits, gets out of her way, and only declares his passion on his death-bed. Poor Harley!—Mr. Godwin's Falkland is a very high and heroic character; he, however, is not a love-hero; and the only part in which an episode of this kind is introduced, is of the most trite and mawkish description. The case is different in *St. Leon*. The author's resuscitated hero there quaffs joy, love, and immortality with a considerable *gusto*, and with appropriate manifestations of triumph.

As to the heroes of the philosophical school of romance, such as Goethe's Werter, etc., they are evidently out of the pale of this reasoning. Instead of

being commonplace and insipid, they are one violent and startling paradox from beginning to end. They run atilt at all established usages and prejudices, and overset all the existing order of society. There is plenty of interest here; and, instead of complaining of a calm, we are borne along by a hurricane of passion and eloquence, certainly without anything of 'temperance that may give it smoothness.' Schiller's Moor, Kotzebue's heroes, and all the other German prodigies are of this stamp.

Shakspeare's lovers and Boccaccio's I like much: they seem to me full of tenderness and manly spirit, and free from insipidity and cant. Otway's Jaffier is, however, the true woman's man—full of passion and effeminacy, a mixture of strength and weakness. Perhaps what I have said above may suggest the true reason and apology for Milton's having unwittingly made Satan the hero of *Paradise Lost*. He suffers infinite losses, and makes the most desperate efforts to recover or avenge them; and it is the struggle with fate and the privation of happiness that sharpens our desires, or enhances our sympathy with good or evil. We have little interest in unalterable felicity, nor can we join with heart and soul in the endless symphonies and exalting hallelujahs of the spirits of the blest. The remorse of a fallen spirit, or 'tears such as angels shed,' touch us more nearly.

ON THE CONVERSATION OF LORDS

An infinite deal of nothing.—SHAKSPEARE.

THE conversation of lords is very different from that of authors. Mounted on horseback, they stick at nothing in the chase, and clear every obstacle with flying leaps, while we poor devils have no chance of keeping up with them with our clouten shoes and long hunting-poles. They have all the benefit of education, society, confidence; they read books, purchase pictures, breed horses, learn to ride, dance, and fence, look after their estates, travel abroad: authors have none of these advantages, or inlets of knowledge, to assist them, except one, reading; and this is still more impoverished and clouded by the painful exercise of their own thoughts. The knowledge of the great has a character of wealth and property in it, like the stores of the rich merchant or manufacturer, who lays his hands on all within his reach: the understanding of the student is like the workshop of the mechanic, who has nothing but what he himself creates. How difficult is the production, how small the display in the one case compared to the other! Most of Correggio's designs are contained in one small room at Parma: how different from the extent and variety of some hereditary and princely collections!

The human mind has a trick (probably a very natural and consoling one) of striking a balance between the favours of wisdom and of fortune, and of making a gratuitous and convenient foil to another. Whether this is owing to envy or to a love of justice,

I will not say; but whichever it is owing to, I must own I do not think it well founded. A scholar is without money: therefore (to make the odds even) we argue (not very wisely) that a rich man must be without ideas. This does not follow: 'the wish is father to that thought'; and the thought is a spurious one. We might as well pretend, that because a man has the advantage of us in height, he is not strong or in good health; or because a woman is handsome, she is not at the same time young, accomplished, and well-bred. Our fastidious self-love or our rustic prejudices may revolt at the accumulation of advantages in others; but we must learn to submit to the mortifying truth, which every day's experience points out, with what grace we may. There were those who grudged to Lord Byron the name of a poet because he was of noble birth; as he himself could not endure the praises bestowed upon Wordsworth, whom he considered as a clown. He carried this weakness so far, that he even seemed to regard it as a piece of presumption in Shakspeare *to be preferred before him* as a dramatic author, and contended that Milton's writing an epic poem and the *Answer to Salmasius* was entirely owing to vanity—so little did he relish the superiority of the old blind schoolmaster. So it is that one party would arrogate every advantage to themselves, while those on the other side would detract from all in their rivals that they do not themselves possess. Some will not have the statue painted; others can see no beauty in the clay model.

The man of rank and fortune, besides his chance for the common or (now and then) an uncommon share of wit and understanding, has it in his power to avail himself of everything that is to be taught of art and science; he has tutors and valets at his beck; he may master the dead languages, he *must* acquire the modern ones; he moves in the highest circles, and may descend to the lowest; the paths of pleasure, of ambition, of knowledge, are open to him; he may devote himself to a particular study, or skim the cream of all; he may

read books or men or things, as he finds most convenient or agreeable; he is not forced to confine his attention to some one dry, uninteresting pursuit; he has a single *hobby*, or half a dozen; he is not distracted by care, by poverty and want of leisure; he has every opportunity and facility afforded him for acquiring various accomplishments of body or mind, and every encouragement, from confidence and success, for making an imposing display of them; he may laugh with the gay, jest with the witty, argue with the wise; he has been in courts, in colleges, and camps, is familiar with playhouses and taverns, with the riding-house and the dissecting-room, has been present at or taken part in the debates of both Houses of Parliament, was in the O. P. row, and is deep in the Fancy, understands the broadsword exercise, is a connoisseur in regimentals, plays the whole game at whist, is a tolerable proficient at backgammon, drives four-in-hand, skates, rows, swims, shoots; knows the different sorts of game and modes of agriculture in the different counties of England, the manufactures and commerce of the different towns, the politics of Europe, the campaigns in Spain, has the Gazette, the newspapers, and reviews at his fingers' ends, has visited the finest scenes of Nature and beheld the choicest works of Art, and is in society where he is continually hearing or talking of all these things; and yet we are surprised to find that a person so circumstanced and qualified has any ideas to communicate or words to express himself, and is not, as by patent and prescription he was bound to be, a mere well-dressed fop of fashion or a booby lord! It would be less remarkable if a poor author, who has none of this giddy range and scope of information, who pores over the page till it fades from his sight, and refines upon his style till the words stick in his throat, should be dull as a beetle and mute as a fish, instead of spontaneously pouring out a volume of wit and wisdom on every subject that can be started.

An author lives out of the world, or mixes chiefly

with those of his own class; which renders him pedantic and pragmatical, or gives him a reserved, hesitating, and *interdicted* manner. A lord or gentleman-commoner goes into the world, and this imparts that fluency, spirit, and freshness to his conversation, which arises from the circulation of ideas and from the greater animation and excitement of unrestrained intercourse. An author's tongue is tied for want of somebody to speak to: his ideas rust and become obscured, from not being brought out in company and exposed to the gaze of instant admiration. A lord has always some one at hand on whom he can 'bestow his tediousness,' and grows voluble, copious, inexhaustible in consequence: his wit is polished, and the flowers of his oratory expanded by his smiling commerce with the world, like the figures in tapestry, that after being thrust into a corner and folded up in closets, are displayed on festival and gala-days. Again, the man of fashion and fortune reduces many of those arts and mysteries to practice, of which the scholar gains all his knowledge from books and vague description. Will not the rules of architecture find a readier reception and sink deeper into the mind of the proprietor of a noble mansion, or of him who means to build one, than of the half-starved occupier of a garret? Will not the political economist's insight into Mr. Ricardo's doctrine of Rent, or Mr. Malthus's theory of Population, be vastly quickened by the circumstance of his possessing a large landed estate and having to pay enormous poor-rates? And, in general, is it not self-evident that a man's knowledge of the true interests of the country will be enlarged just in proportion to the *stake* he has in it? A person may have read accounts of different cities and the customs of different nations: but will this give him the same accurate idea of the situation of celebrated places, of the aspect and manners of the inhabitants, or the same lively impulse and ardour and fund of striking particulars in expatiating upon them, as if he had run over half the countries of Europe, for no other purpose than

to satisfy his own curiosity, and excite that of others on his return? I many years ago looked into the Duke of Newcastle's *Treatise on Horsemanship;* all I remember of it is some quaint cuts of the Duke and his riding-master introduced to illustrate the lessons. Had I myself possessed a stud of Arabian coursers, with grooms and a master of the horse to assist me in reducing these precepts to practice, they would have made a stronger impression on my mind; and what interested myself from vanity or habit, I could have made interesting to others. I am sure I could have learnt to *ride the Great Horse*, and do twenty other things, in the time I have employed in endeavouring to make something out of nothing, or in conning the same problem fifty times over, as monks count over their beads! I have occasionally in my life bought a few prints, and hung them up in my room with great satisfaction; but is it to be supposed possible, from this casual circumstance, that I should compete in taste or in the knowledge of *vertu* with a peer of the realm, who has in his possession the costly designs, or a wealthy commoner, who has spent half his fortune in learning to distinguish copies from originals? 'A question not to be asked!' Nor is it likely that the having dipped into the *Memoirs of Count Grammont*, or of Lady Vane in *Peregrine Pickle*, should enable any one to sustain a conversation on subjects of love and gallantry with the same ease, grace, brilliancy, and spirit as the having been engaged in a hundred adventures of one's own, or heard the scandal and tittle-tattle of fashionable life for the last thirty years canvassed a hundred times. Books may be manufactured from other books by some dull, mechanical process: it is conversation and the access to the best society that alone fit us for society; or 'the act and practique part of life must be the mistress to our theorique,' before we can hope to shine in mixed company, or bend our previous knowledge to ordinary and familiar uses out of that plaster-cast mould which is as brittle as it is formal!

There is another thing which tends to produce the

same effect, viz., that lords and gentlemen seldom trouble themselves about the knotty and uninviting parts of a subject: they leave it to 'the dregs of earth' to drain the cup or find the bottom. They are attracted by the frothy and sparkling. If a question puzzles them, or is not likely to amuse others, they leave it to its fate, or to those whose business it is to contend with difficulty, and to pursue truth for its own sake. They string together as many available *off-hand* topics as they can procure for love or money; and, aided by a good person or address, sport them with very considerable effect at the next rout or party they go to. They do not *bore* you with pedantry, or tease you with sophistry. Their conversation is not made up of *moot-points* or *choke-pears*. They do not willingly forego 'the feast of reason or the flow of soul' to grub up some solitary truth or dig for hidden treasure. They are amateurs, not professors; the patrons, not the drudges of knowledge. An author loses half his life, and *stultifies* his faculties, in hopes to find out something which perhaps neither he nor any one else can ever find out. For this he neglects half a hundred acquirements, half a hundred accomplishments. *Aut Cæsar aut nihil.* He is proud of the discovery or of the fond pursuit of one truth—a lord is vain of a thousand ostentatious commonplaces. If the latter ever devotes himself to some crabbed study, or sets about finding out the longitude, he is then to be looked upon as a humorist if he fails—a genius if he succeeds—and no longer belongs to the class I have been speaking of.

Perhaps a multiplicity of attainments and pursuits is not very favourable to their selectness; as a local and personal acquaintance with objects of imagination takes away from, instead of adding to, their romantic interest. Familiarity is said to breed contempt; or at any rate, the being brought into contact with places, persons, or things that we have hitherto only heard or read of, removes a certain aerial, delicious veil of refinement from them, and strikes at that *ideal* abstraction which is the charm and boast of a life

conversant chiefly with books. The huddling a number of tastes and studies together tends to degrade and vulgarise each, and to give a crude, unconcocted, dissipated turn to the mind. Instead of stuffing it full of gross, palpable, immediate objects of excitement, a wiser plan would be to leave something in reserve, something hovering in airy space to draw our attention out of ourselves, to excite hope, curiosity, wonder, and never to satisfy it. The great art is not to throw a glare of light upon all objects, or to lay the whole extended landscape bare at one view; but so to manage as to see the more amiable side of things, and through the narrow vistas and loop-holes of retreat—

Catch glimpses that may make us less forlorn.

I hate to annihilate air and distance by the perpetual use of an opera glass, to run everything into foreground, and to interpose no medium between the thought and the object. The breath of words stirs and plays idly with the gossamer web of fancy; the touch of things destroys it. I have seen a good deal of authors; and I believe that they (as well as I) would quite as lieve I had not. Places I have seen, too, that did not answer my expectation. Pictures (that is, some few of them) are the only things that are the better for our having studied them 'face to face, not in a glass darkly,' and that in themselves surpass any description we can give, or any notion we can form of them. But I do not think seriously, after all, that those who possess are the best judges of them. They become furniture, property in their hands. The purchasers look to the price they will fetch, or turn to that which they have cost. They consider not beauty or expression, but the workmanship, the date, the pedigree, the school—something that will figure in the description in a catalogue or in a puff in a newspaper. They are blinded by silly admiration of whatever belongs to themselves, and warped so as to eye 'with jealous leer malign' all that is not theirs. Taste is

melted down in the crucible of avarice and vanity, and leaves a wretched *caput mortuum* of pedantry and conceit. As to books, they 'best can feel them who have read them most,' and who rely on them for their only support and their only chance of distinction. They most keenly relish the graces of style who have in vain tried to make them their own: they alone understand the value of a thought who have gone through the trouble of thinking. The privation of other advantages is not a clear loss, if it is counterbalanced by a proportionable concentration and unity of interest in what is left. The love of letters is the forlorn hope of the man of letters. His ruling passion is the love of fame. A member of the Roxburghe Club has a certain work (let it be the *Decameron* of Boccaccio) splendidly bound, and in the old quarto edition, we will say. In this not only his literary taste is gratified, but the pride of property, the love of external elegance and decoration. The poor student has only a paltry and somewhat worn copy of the same work (or perhaps only a translation) which he picked up at a stall, standing out of a shower of rain. What then! has not the Noble Virtuoso doubly the advantage, and a much higher pleasure in the perusal of the work? No; for these are vulgar and mechanical helps to the true enjoyment of letters. From all this mock display and idle parade of binding and arms and dates, his unthought-of rival is precluded, and sees only the talismanic words, feels only the spirit of the author, and in that author reads 'with sparkling eyes'

> His title to a mansion in the skies.

Oh! divine air of learning, fanned by the undying breath of genius, still let me taste thee, free from all adventitious admixtures,

> Pure in the last recesses of the soul!

We are far, at present, from the style of Swift's *Polite Conversation*. The fashionable tone has quite

changed in this respect, and almost gone into the opposite extreme. At that period the polite world seems to have been nearly at a stand, in a state of intellectual *abeyance*; or, in the interval between the disuse of chivalrous exercises and the introduction of modern philosophy, not to have known how to pass its time, and to have sunk into the most commonplace formality and unmeaning apathy. But lo! at a signal given, or rather prompted by that most powerful of all calls, the want of something to do, all rush into the lists, having armed themselves anew with the shining panoply of science and of letters, with an ear[illegible], a perseverance, a dexterity, and a success, that [illegible]ly astonishing. The higher classes have of late [illegible] the lead almost as much in arts as they formerly [illegible] in arms, when the last was the only prescribed [illegible] of distinguishing themselves from the rabble, wh[illegible] they treated as serfs and churls. The prevailing [illegible] at present is to regard mere authors (who are n[illegible] also of gentle blood) as dull, illiterate, poor creatures, a sort of pretenders to taste and elegance, and adventurers in intellect. The true adepts in black-letter are knights of the shire: the sworn patentees of Parnassus are Peers of the Realm. Not to pass for a literary quack, you must procure a diploma from the College of Heralds. A dandy conceals a bibliomanist: our belles are *blue stockings*. The Press is so entirely monopolised by beauty, birth, or importance in the State,[1] that an author by profession resigns the field to the crowd of well-dressed competitors, out of modesty or pride fain to keep out of sight—

> Or write by stealth, and blush to find it fame!

Lord Byron used to boast that he could bring forward a dozen young men of fashion who would beat all the regular authors at their several weapons of wit or

[1] This was written when the *mania* for fashionable novels by Noble Authors was at its height.—ED. of *Sketches and Essays*, 1839.

argument; and though I demur to the truth of the assertion, yet there is no saying till the thing is tried. Young gentlemen make *very pretty sparrers*, but are not the 'ugliest customers' when they take off the gloves. Lord Byron himself was in his capacity of author an *out-and-outer;* but then it was at the expense of other things, for he could not talk except in short sentences and sarcastic allusions, he had no ready resources; all his ideas moulded themselves into stanzas, and all his ardour was carried off in rhyme. The channel of his pen was worn deep by habit and power; the current of his thoughts flowed strong in it, and nothing remained to supply the neighbouring flats and shallows of miscellaneous conversation, but a few sprinklings of wit or gushes of spleen. An intense purpose concentrated and gave a determined direction to his energies, that 'held on their way, unslacked of motion.' The track of his genius was like a volcanic eruption, a torrent of burning lava, full of heat and splendour and headlong fury, that left all dry, cold, hard, and barren behind it! To say nothing of a host of female authors, a bright galaxy above our heads, there is no young lady of fashion in the present day, scarce a boarding-school girl, that is not mistress of as many branches of knowledge as would set up half a dozen literary hacks. In lieu of the sampler and the plain-stitch of our grandmothers, they have so many hours for French, so many for Italian, so many for English grammar and composition, so many for geography and the use of the globes, so many for history, so many for botany, so many for painting, music, dancing, riding, etc. One almost wonders how so many studies are crammed into the twenty-four hours; or how such fair and delicate creatures can master them without spoiling the smoothness of their brows, the sweetness of their tempers, or the graceful simplicity of their manners. A girl learns French (not only to read, but to speak it) in a few months, while a boy is as many years in learning to construe Latin. Why so? Chiefly because the one is treated as a *bagatelle* or agreeable relaxation; the other

as a serious task or necessary evil. Education, a very few years back, was looked upon as a hardship, and enforced by menaces and blows, instead of being carried on (as now) as an amusement and under the garb of pleasure, and with the allurements of self-love. It is found that the products of the mind flourish better and shoot up more quickly in the sunshine of good-humour and in the air of freedom, than under the frowns of sullenness, or the shackles of authority. 'The labour we delight in physics pain.' The idlest people are not those who have most leisure time to dispose of as they choose: take away the feeling of compulsion, and you supply a motive for application, by converting a toil into a pleasure. This makes nearly all the difference between the hardest drudgery and the most delightful exercise—not the degree of exertion, but the motive and the accompanying sensation. Learning does not gain proselytes by the austerity or awfulness of its looks. By representing things as so difficult, and as exacting such dreadful sacrifices, and to be acquired under such severe penalties, we not only deter the student from the attempt, but lay a dead-weight upon the imagination, and destroy that cheerfulness and alacrity of spirit which is the spring of thought and action. But to return. An author by profession reads a few works that he intends to criticise and cut up 'for a consideration'; a *blue-stocking* by profession reads all that comes out to pass the time or satisfy her curiosity. The author has something to say about Fielding, Richardson, or even the Scotch novels; but he is soon distanced by the fair critic, or overwhelmed with the contents of whole Circulating Libraries poured out upon his head without stint or intermission. He reads for an object, and to live; she for the sake of reading, or to talk. Be this as it may, the idle reader at present reads twenty times as many books as the learned one. The former skims the surface of knowledge, and carries away the striking points and a variety of amusing detail, while the latter reserves himself for great occasions, or perhaps does

nothing under the pretence of having so much to do.

> From every work he challenges *essoin*,
> For contemplation's sake.

The *literati* of Europe threaten at present to become the Monks of letters, and from having taken up learning as a profession, to live on the reputation of it. As gentlemen have turned authors, authors seem inclined to turn gentlemen; and enjoying the *otium cum dignitate*, to be much too refined and abstracted to condescend to the subordinate or mechanical parts of knowledge. They are too wise in general to be acquainted with anything in particular; and remain in a proud and listless ignorance of all that is within the reach of the vulgar. They are not, as of old, walking libraries or Encyclopædias, but rather certain faculties of the mind personified. They scorn the material and instrumental branches of inquiry, the husk and bran, and affect only the fine flour of literature—they are only to be called in to give the last polish to style, the last refinement to thought. They leave it to their drudges, the Reading Public, to accumulate the facts, to arrange the evidence, to make out the *data*, and like great painters whose pupils have got in the groundwork and the established proportions of a picture, come forward to go over the last thin glazing of the colours, or throw in the finer touches of expression. On my excusing myself to Northcote for some blunder in history, by saying, 'I really had not time to read,'—he said, 'No, but you have time to write!' And once a celebrated critic taking me to task as to the subject of my pursuits, and receiving regularly the same answer to his queries, that I knew nothing of chemistry, nothing of astronomy, of botany, of law, of politics, etc., at last exclaimed, somewhat impatiently, 'What the devil is it, then, you *do* know?' I laughed, and was not very much disconcerted at the reproof, as it was just.

Modern men of letters may be divided into three classes; the mere scholar or *bookworm*, all whose knowledge is taken from books, and who may be passed

by as an obsolete character, little inquired after—the literary *hack* or coffee-house politician, who gets his information mostly from hearsay, and who makes some noise indeed, but the echo of it does not reach beyond his own club or circle—and the man of real or of pretended genius, who aims to draw upon his own resources of thought or feeling, and to throw a new light upon nature and books. This last personage (if he acts up to his supposed character) has too much to do to lend himself to a variety of pursuits, or to lay himself out to please in all companies. He has a task in hand, a vow to perform; and he cannot be diverted from it by incidental or collateral objects. All the time that he does not devote to this paramount duty, he should have to himself, to repose, to lie fallow, to gather strength and recruit himself. A boxer is led into the lists that he may not waste a particle of vigour needlessly; and a leader in Parliament, on the day that he is expected to get up a grand attack or defence, is not to be pestered with the ordinary news of the day. So an author (who is, or would be thought original) has no time for *spare* accomplishments or ornamental studies. All that he intermeddles with must be marshalled to bear upon his purpose. He must be acquainted with books and the thoughts of others, but only so far as to assist him on his way, and 'to take progression from them.' He starts from the point where *they* left off. All that does not aid him in his new career goes for nothing, is thrown out of the account, or is a useless and splendid incumbrance. Most of his time he passes in brooding over some wayward hint or suggestion of a thought, nor is he bound to give any explanation of what he does with the rest. He tries to melt down truth into essences—to express some fine train of feeling, to solve some difficult problem, to start what is new, or to perfect what is old; in a word, not to do what others can do (which in the division of mental labour he holds to be unnecessary), but to do what they all with their joint efforts cannot do. For this he is in no hurry, and must have the disposal of

his leisure and the choice of his subject. The public can wait. He deems with a living poet, who is an example of his own doctrine—

> That there are powers
> Which of themselves our minds impress;
> That we can feed this mind of ours
> In a wise passiveness.

Or I have sometimes thought that the dalliance of the mind with Fancy or with Truth might be described almost in the words of Andrew Marvell's address 'To his Coy Mistress':

> Had we but world enough and time,
> This toying, lady, were no crime;
> We would sit down, and think which way
> To walk and pass our love's long day.
> Thou by the Indian Ganges' side
> Shouldst rubies find: I by the tide
> Of Humber would complain. I would
> Love you ten years before the flood;
> And you should, if you please, refuse
> Till the conversion of the Jews.
> My contemplative love should grow
> Vaster than empires, and more slow.
> An hundred years should go to praise
> Thine eyes, and on thy forehead gaze;
> Two hundred to adore each breast,
> But thirty thousand to the rest;
> An age at least to every part,
> And the last age should show your heart:
> For, lady, you deserve this state;
> Nor would I love at lower rate!

The aspiring poet or prose writer undertakes to do a certain thing; and if he succeeds, it is enough. While he is intent upon that or asleep, others may amuse themselves how they can with any topic that happens to be afloat, and all the eloquence they are masters of, so that they do not disturb the champion of truth, or the proclaimer of beauty to the world. The Conversation of Lords, on the contrary, is to this like a newspaper to a book—the latter treats well or ill of one subject, and leads to a conclusion on one point; the other is made up of all sorts of things jumbled together, debates in parliament, law reports, plays, operas, concerts,

routs, levees, fashions, auctions, the last fight, foreign news, deaths, marriages, and *crim.-cons.*, bankruptcies, and quack medicines; and a large allowance is frequently to be made, besides the natural confusion of the subjects, for *cross-readings* in the speaker's mind![1] Or, to take another illustration, fashionable conversation has something theatrical or *melodramatic* in it; it is got up for immediate effect, it is calculated to make a great display, there is a profusion of paint, scenery, and dresses, the music is loud, there are banquets and processions, you have the dancers from the Opera, the horses from Astley's, and the elephant from Exeter 'Change, the stage is all life, bustle, noise, and glare, the audience brilliant and delighted, and the whole goes off in a blaze of phosphorus: but the dialogue is poor, the story improbable, the critics shake their heads in the pit, and the next day the piece is *damned!*

In short, a man of rank and fortune takes the adventitious and ornamental part of letters, the obvious, the popular, the fashionable, that serves to amuse at the time, or minister to the cravings of vanity, without laying a very heavy tax on his own understanding, or the patience of his hearers. He furnishes his mind as he does his house, with what is showy, striking, and of the newest pattern: he mounts his *hobby* as he does his horse, which is brought to his door for an airing, and

[1] As when a person asks you 'whether you do not find a strong resemblance between Rubens's pictures and Quarles's poetry?'—which is owing to the critic's having lately been at Antwerp and bought an edition of Quarles's *Emblems*. Odd combinations must take place where a number of ideas are brought together, with only a thin, hasty partition between them, and without a sufficient quantity of judgment to discriminate. An Englishman, of some apparent consequence, passing by the St. Peter Martyr of Titian at Venice, observed, 'It was a copy of the same subject by Domenichino at Bologna.' This betrayed an absolute ignorance both of Titian and of Domenichino, and of the whole world of art; yet, unless I had also seen the St. Peter at Bologna, this connoisseur would have had the advantage of me, two to one, and might have disputed the precedence of the two pictures with me, but that chronology would have come to my aid. Thus persons who travel from place to place, and roam from subject to subject, make up by the extent and discursiveness of their knowledge for the want of truth and refinement in their conception of the objects of it.

which (should it prove restive or sluggish) he turns away for another; or, like a child at a fair, gets into a roundabout of knowledge, till his head becomes giddy, runs from sight to sight, from booth to booth, and, like the child, goes home loaded with trinkets, gewgaws and rattles. He does not pore and pine over an idea (like some poor hypochondriac) till it becomes impracticable, unsociable, incommunicable, absorbed in mysticism, and lost in minuteness: he is not upon oath never to utter anything but oracles, but rattles away in a fine careless, hare-brained, dashing manner, hit or miss, and succeeds the better for it. Nor does he prose over the same stale round of politics and the state of the nation (with the coffee-house politician), but launches out with freedom and gaiety into whatever has attraction and interest in it, 'runs the great circle, and is still at home.' He is inquisitive, garrulous, credulous, sanguine, florid—neither pedantic nor vulgar. Neither is he intolerant, exclusive, bigoted to one set of opinions or one class of individuals. He clothes an abstract theory with illustrations from his own experience and observation, hates what is dry and dull, and throws in an air of high health, buoyant spirits, fortune, and splendid connections to give animation and vividness to what perhaps might otherwise want it. He selects what is palpable without being gross or trivial, lends it colour from the flush of success, and elevation from the distinctions of rank. He runs on and never stops for an answer, rather dictating to others than endeavouring to ascertain their opinions, solving his own questions, improving upon their hints, and bearing down or precluding opposition by a good-natured loquacity or stately dogmatism. All this is perhaps more edifying as a subject of speculation than delightful in itself. Shakspeare says, 'A man's mind is parcel of his fortunes'—and I think the inference will be borne out in the present case. I should guess that in the prevailing tone of fashionable society or aristocratic literature would be found all that variety, splendour, facility, and startling effect which corresponds with

external wealth, magnificence of appearance, and a command of opportunity; while there would be wanting whatever depends chiefly on intensity of pursuit, on depth of feeling, and on simplicity and independence of mind joined with straitened fortune. Prosperity is a great teacher; adversity is a greater. Possession pampers the mind; privation trains and strengthens it. Accordingly, we find but one really great name (Bacon) in this rank of English society, where superiority is taken for granted, and reflected from outward circumstances. The rest are in the second class. Lord Bolingbroke, whom Pope idolised (and it pains me that all his idols are not mine), was a boastful, empty mouther! I never knew till the other day, that Lord Bolingbroke was the model on which Mr. Pitt formed himself. He was his *Magnus Apollo;* and no wonder. The late Minister used to lament it as the great desideratum of English literature, that there was no record anywhere existing of his speeches as they were spoken, and declared that he would [illegible] any price for one of them, reported as speeches were reported in the newspapers in our time. Being asked which he thought the best of his written productions, he would answer, raising his eyebrows and deepening the tones of his voice to a sonorous bass—'Why, undoubtedly, Sir, the *Letter to Sir William Wyndham* is the most masterly of all his writings, and the first composition for wit and eloquence in the English language';—and then he would give his reasons at great length and *con amore*, and say that Junius had formed himself entirely upon it. Lord Bolingbroke had, it seems, a house next door to one belonging to Lord Chatham at Walham Green; and as the gardens joined, they could hear Lord Bolingbroke walking out with the company that came to see him in his retirement, and elaborately declaiming politics to the old lords and statesmen that were with him, and philosophy to the younger ones. Pitt learned this story from his father when a boy. This account, interesting in itself, was to me the more interesting and extra-

ordinary, as it had always appeared to me that Mr. Pitt was quite an original, *sui generis*—

> As if a man were author of himself,
> And own'd no other kin;

that so far from having a model or idol that he looked up to and grounded himself upon, he had neither admiration nor consciousness of anything existing out of himself, and that he lived solely in the sound of his own voice and revolved in the circle of his own hollow and artificial periods. I have it from the same authority that he thought Cobbett the best writer and Horne Tooke the cleverest man of the day. His hatred of Wyndham was excessive and mutual. Perhaps it may be said that Lord Chatham was a first-rate man in his way, and I incline to think it; but he was a self-made man, bred in a camp, not in a court, and his rank was owing to his talents.[1]

[1] There are few things more contemptible than the conversation of mere *men of the town*. It is made up of the technicalities and cant of all professions, without the spirit or knowledge of any. It is flashy and vapid, or is like the rinsings of different liquors at a night-cellar instead of a bottle of fine old port. It is without body or clearness, and a heap of affectation. In fact, I am very much of the opinion of that old Scotch gentleman who owned that 'he preferred the dullest book he had ever read to the most brilliant conversation it had ever fallen to his lot to hear!'

THE LETTER-BELL

Complaints are frequently made of the vanity and shortness of human life, when, if we examine its smallest details, they present a world by themselves. The most trifling objects, retraced with the eye of memory, assume the vividness, the delicacy, and importance of insects seen through a magnifying glass. There is no end of the brilliancy of the variety. The habitual feeling of the love of life may be compared to 'one entire and perfect chrysolite,' which, if analysed, breaks into a thousand shining fragments. Ask the sum-total of the value of human life, and we are puzzled with the length of the account, and the multiplicity of items in it: take any one of them apart, and it is wonderful what matter for reflection will be found in it! As I write this, the *Letter-Bell* passes; it has a lively, pleasant sound with it, and not only fills the street with its importunate clamour, but rings clear through the length of many half-forgotten years. It strikes upon the ear, it vibrates to the brain, it wakes me from the dream of time, it flings me back upon my first entrance into life, the period of my first coming up to town, when all around was strange, uncertain, adverse—a hubbub of confused noises, a chaos of shifting objects—and when this sound alone, startling me with the recollection of a letter I had to send to the friends I had lately left, brought me as it were to myself, made me feel that I had links still connecting me with the universe, and gave me hope and patience to persevere. At that loud-tinkling, interrupted sound, the long

line of blue hills near the place where I was brought up waves in the horizon, a golden sunset hovers over them, the dwarf oaks rustle their red leaves in the evening breeze, and the road from Wem to Shrewsbury, by which I first set out on my journey through life, stares me in the face as plain, but, from time and change, not less visionary and mysterious than the pictures in the *Pilgrim's Progress*. Or if the Letter-Bell does not lead me a dance into the country, it fixes me in the thick of my town recollections, I know not how long ago. It was a kind of alarm to break off from my work when there happened to be company to dinner or when I was going to the play. *That* was going to the play, indeed, when I went twice a year, and had not been more than half a dozen times in my life. Even the idea that any one else in the house was going, was a sort of reflected enjoyment, and conjured up a lively anticipation of the scene. I remember a Miss D——, a maiden lady from Wales (who in her youth was to have been married to an earl), tantalised me greatly in this way, by talking all day of going to see Mrs. Siddons' 'airs and graces' at night in some favourite part; and when the Letter-Bell announced that the time was approaching, and its last receding sound lingered on the ear, or was lost in silence, how anxious and uneasy I became, lest she and her companion should not be in time to get good places —lest the curtain should draw up before they arrived— and lest I should lose one line or look in the intelligent report which I should hear the next morning! The punctuating of time at that early period—everything that gives it an articulate voice—seems of the utmost consequence; for we do not know what scenes in the *ideal* world may run out of them: a world of interest may hang upon every instant, and we can hardly sustain the weight of future years which are contained in embryo in the most minute and inconsiderable passing events. How often have I put off writing a letter till it was too late! How often have I had to run after the postman with it—now missing, now recovering the sound of his bell—breathless, angry with myself—then

hearing the welcome sound come full round a corner—and seeing the scarlet costume which set all my fears and self-reproaches at rest! I do not recollect having ever repented giving a letter to the postman or wishing to retrieve it after he had once deposited it in his bag. What I have once set my hand to, I take the consequences of, and have been always pretty much of the same humour in this respect. I am not like the person who, having sent off a letter to his mistress, who resided a hundred and twenty miles in the country, and disapproving, on second thoughts, of some expressions contained in it, took a post-chaise and four to follow and intercept it the next morning. At other times, I have sat and watched the decaying embers in a little back painting-room (just as the wintry day declined), and brooded over the half-finished copy of a Rembrandt, or a landscape by Vangoyen, placing it where it might catch a dim gleam of light from the fire; while the Letter-Bell was the only sound that drew my thoughts to the world without, and reminded me that I had a task to perform in it. As to that landscape, methinks I see it now—

> The slow canal, the yellow-blossomed vale,
> The willow-tufted bank, the gliding sail.

There was a windmill, too, with a poor low clay-built cottage beside it: how delighted I was when I had made the tremulous, undulating reflection in the water, and saw the dull canvas become a lucid mirror of the commonest features of nature! Certainly, painting gives one a strong interest in nature and humanity (it is not the *dandy-school* of morals or sentiment)—

> While with an eye made quiet by the power
> Of harmony and the deep power of joy,
> We see into the life of things.

Perhaps there is no part of a painter's life (if we must tell 'the secrets of the prison-house') in which he has more enjoyment of himself and his art, than that in which, after his work is over, and with furtive,

sidelong glances at what he has done, he is employed in washing his brushes and cleaning his pallet for the day. Afterwards, when he gets a servant in livery to do this for him, he may have other and more ostensible sources of satisfaction—greater splendour, wealth, or fame; but he will not be so wholly in his art, nor will his art have such a hold on him as when he was too poor to transfer its meanest drudgery to others—too humble to despise aught that had to do with the object of his glory and his pride, with that on which all his projects of ambition or pleasure were founded. 'Entire affection scorneth nicer hands.' When the professor is above this mechanical part of his business, it may have become a *stalking-horse* to other worldly schemes, but is no longer his *hobby-horse* and the delight of his inmost thoughts.

I used sometimes to hurry through this part of my occupation, while the Letter-Bell (which was my dinner-bell) summoned me to the fraternal board, where youth and hope

> Made good digestion wait on appetite
> And health on both;

or oftener I put it off till after dinner, that I might loiter longer and with more luxurious indolence over it, and connect it with the thoughts of my next day's labours.

The dustman's bell, with its heavy monotonous noise, and the brisk, lively tinkle of the muffin-bell, have something in them, but not much. They will bear dilating upon with the utmost licence of inventive prose. All things are not alike *conductors* to the imagination. A learned Scotch professor found fault with an ingenious friend and arch-critic for cultivating a rookery on his grounds: the professor declared 'he would as soon think of encouraging a *froggery*.' This was barbarous as it was senseless. Strange, that a country that has produced the *Scotch Novels* and *Gertrude of Wyoming* should want sentiment!

The postman's double knock at the door the next morning is 'more germain to the matter.' How that

knock often goes to the heart! We distinguish to a nicety the arrival of the Twopenny or the General Post. The summons of the latter is louder and heavier, as bringing news from a greater distance, and as, the longer it has been delayed, fraught with a deeper interest. We catch the sound of what is to be paid —eightpence, ninepence, a shilling—and our hopes generally rise with the postage. How we are provoked at the delay in getting change—at the servant who does not hear the door! Then if the postman passes, and we do not hear the expected knock, what a pang 's there! It is like the silence of death—of hope! We think he does it on purpose, and enjoys all the misery of our suspense. I have sometimes walked out to see the Mail-Coach pass, by which I had sent a letter, or to meet it when I expected one. I never see a Mail-Coach, for this reason, but I look at it as the bearer of glad tidings—the messenger of fate. I have reason to say so. The finest sight in the metropolis is that of the Mail-Coaches setting off from Piccadilly. The horses paw the ground, and are impatient to be gone, as if conscious of the precious burden they convey. There is a peculiar secrecy and despatch, significant and full of meaning, in all the proceedings concerning them. Even the outside passengers have an erect and supercilious air, as if proof against the accidents of the journey. In fact, it seems indifferent whether they are to encounter the summer's heat or winter's cold, since they are borne on through the air in a winged chariot. The Mail-Carts drive up; the transfer of packages is made; and, at a signal given, they start off, bearing the irrevocable scrolls that give wings to thought, and that bind or sever hearts for ever. How we hate the Putney and Brentford stages that draw up in a line after they are gone! Some persons think the sublimest object in nature is a ship launched on the bosom of the ocean; but give me, for my private satisfaction, the Mail-Coaches that pour down Piccadilly of an evening, tear up the pavement, and devour the way before them to the Land's-End!

In Cowper's time, Mail-Coaches were hardly set up; but he has beautifully described the coming-in of the Post-Boy:—

> Hark! 'tis the twanging horn o'er yonder bridge,
> That with its wearisome but needful length
> Bestrides the wintry flood, in which the moon
> Sees her unwrinkled face reflected bright:
> He comes, the herald of a noisy world,
> With spattered boots, strapped waist, and frozen locks;
> News from all nations lumbering at his back.
> True to his charge, the close-packed load behind.
> Yet careless what he brings, his one concern
> Is to conduct it to the destined inn;
> And having dropped the expected bag, pass on.
> He whistles as he goes, light-hearted wretch!
> Cold and yet cheerful; messenger of grief
> Perhaps to thousands, and of joy to some;
> To him indifferent whether grief or joy.
> Houses in ashes and the fall of stocks,
> Births, deaths, and marriages, epistles wet
> With tears that trickled down the writer's cheeks
> Fast as the periods from his fluent quill,
> Or charged with amorous sighs of absent swains
> Or nymphs responsive, equally affect
> His horse and him, unconscious of them all.

And yet, notwithstanding this, and so many other passages that seem like the very marrow of our being, Lord Byron denies that Cowper was a poet!—The Mail-Coach is an improvement on the Post-Boy; but I fear it will hardly bear so poetical a description. The picturesque and dramatic do not keep pace with the useful and mechanical. The telegraphs that lately communicated the intelligence of the new revolution to all France within a few hours, are a wonderful contrivance; but they are less striking and appalling than the beacon-fires (mentioned by Æschylus), which, lighted from hilltop to hilltop, announced the taking of Troy, and the return of Agamemnon.

ENVY

Envy is the *grudging*, or receiving pain from, any accomplishment or advantage possessed by another. It is one of the most tormenting and odious of the passions, inasmuch as it does not consist in the enjoyment or pursuit of any good to ourselves, but in the hatred and jealousy of the good fortune of others, and the debarring and defrauding them of their due and what is of no use to us, on the *dog in the manger* principle; and it is at the same time as mean as it is revolting, as being accompanied with a sense of weakness, and a desire to conceal and tamper with the truth and its own convictions, out of paltry spite and vanity. It is, however, but an excess or excrescence of the other passions (such as pride or avarice), or of a wish to monopolise all the good things of life to ourselves, which makes us impatient and dissatisfied at seeing any one else in possession of that to which we think we have the only fair title. Envy is the deformed and distorted offspring of *egotism*; and when we reflect on the strange and disproportioned character of the parent, we cannot wonder at the perversity and waywardness of the child. Such is the absorbing and exorbitant quality of our self-love, that it represents us as of infinitely more importance in our own eyes than the whole universe put together, and would sacrifice the claims and interest of all the world beside to the least of its caprices or extravagances: need we be surprised, then, that this little, upstart, overweening self, that would trample on the globe itself, and then weep for new ones to

conquer, should be uneasy, mad, mortified, eaten up with chagrin and melancholy, and hardly able to bear its own existence, at seeing a simple competitor among the crowd cross its path, jostle its pretensions, and stagger its opinion of its exclusive right to admiration and superiority? This it is that constitutes the offence, that gives the shock, that inflicts the wound, that some poor creature (as we would fain suppose) whom we had before overlooked and entirely disregarded as not worth our notice, should of a sudden enter the lists and challenge comparison with us. The presumption is excessive; and so is our thirst of revenge. From the moment, however, that the eye fixes on another as the object of envy, we cannot take it off; for our pride and self-conceit magnify that which obstructs our success and lessens our self-importance into a monster; we see nothing else, we hear of nothing else, we dream of nothing else; it haunts us and takes possession of our whole souls; and as we are engrossed by it ourselves, so we fancy that all the rest of the world are equally taken up with our petty annoyances and disappointed pride. Hence the 'jealous leer malign' of envy, which, not daring to look that which provokes it in the face, cannot yet keep its eyes from it, and gloats over and becomes as it were enamoured of the very object of its loathing and deadly hate. We pay off the score which our littleness and vanity has been running up, by ample and gratuitous concessions to the first person that gives a check to our swelling self-complacency, and forces us to drag him into an unwilling comparison with ourselves. It is no matter who the person is, or what his pretensions—if they are a counterpoise to our own, we think them of more consequence than anything else in the world. This often gives rise to laughable results. We see the jealousies among servants, hackney-coachmen, cobblers in a stall: we are amused with the rival advertisements of quacks and stage-coach proprietors, and smile to read the significant intimation on some shop window, 'No connection with next door'; but the same folly runs through the whole of life; each

person thinks that he who stands in his way or outstrips him in a particular pursuit, is the most enviable, and at the same time the most hateful character in the world. Nothing can show the absurdity of the passion of envy in a more striking point of view than the number of rival claims which it entirely overlooks, while it would arrogate all excellence to itself. The loftiness of our ambition and the narrowness of our views are equal, and, indeed, both depend upon the same cause. The player envies only the player, the poet envies only the poet, because each confines his idea of excellence to his own profession and pursuit, and thinks, if he could but remove some one particular competitor out of his way, he should have a clear stage to himself, and be a 'Phœnix gazed by all': as if, though we crushed one rival, another would not start up; or as if there were not a thousand other claims, a thousand other modes of excellence and praiseworthy acquirements, to divide the palm and defeat his idle pretension to the sole and unqualified admiration of mankind. Professors of every class see merit only in their own line; yet they would blight and destroy that *little bit* of excellence which alone they acknowledge to exist, except as it centres in themselves. Speak in praise of an actor to another actor, and he turns away with impatience and disgust: speak disparagingly of the first as an actor in general, and the latter eagerly takes up the quarrel as his own: thus the *esprit de corps* only comes in as an appendage to our self-love. It is, perhaps, well that we are so blind to merit out of our immediate sphere, for it might only prove an additional *eyesore*, increase the obliquity of our mental vision, multiply our antipathies, or end in total indifference and despair. There is nothing so bad as a cynical apathy and contempt for every art and science from a superficial *smattering* and general acquaintance with them all. The merest pedantry and the most tormenting jealousy and heart-burning of envy are better than this. Those who are masters of different advantages and accomplishments are seldom the more

satisfied with them: they still aim at something else (however contemptible) which they have not or cannot do. So Pope says of Wharton—

> Though wondering senates hung on all he spoke,
> The club must hail him master of the joke.
> Shall parts so various aim at nothing new?
> He'll shine a Tully and a Wilmot too.

The world, indeed, are pretty even with these constellations of splendid and superfluous qualities in their fastidious estimate of their own pretensions, for (if possible) they never give any individual credit for more than one leading attainment, if that. If a man is an artist, his being a fine musician adds nothing to his fame. When the public strain a point to own one claim, it is on condition that the fortunate candidate waives every other. The mind is prepared with a plausible antithesis in such cases against the formidable encroachment of vanity: one qualification is regularly made a foil to another. We allow no one to be two things at a time: it quite unsettles our notion of personal identity. If we allow a man wit, it is part of the bargain that he wants judgment: if style, he wants matter. Rich, but a fool or miser: a beauty, but vain, and no better than she should be;—*so runs the bond.* 'But' is the favourite monosyllable of envy and self- Raphael could draw and Titian could colour: [illegible] never get beyond these points while the world stands; the human understanding is not cast in a mould to receive double proofs of entire superiority to itself. It is folly to expect it. If a further claim be set up, we call in question the solidity of the first, incline to retract it, and suspect that the whole is a juggle and a piece of impudence, as we threaten a common beggar with the stocks for following us to ask a second alms. This is, in fact, one source of the prevalence and deep root which envy has in the human mind: we are incredulous as to the truth and justice of the demands which are so often made upon our pity or our admiration; but let the distress or the

merit be established beyond all controversy, and we open our hearts and purses on the spot, and sometimes run into the contrary extreme when charity or admiration becomes the fashion. No one envies the Author of *Waverley*, because all admire him, and are sensible that admire him as they will, they can never admire him enough. We do not envy the sun for shining when we feel the warmth and see the light. When some persons start an injudicious parallel between Sir Walter and Shakspeare, we then may grow jealous and uneasy, because this interferes with our older and more firmly rooted conviction of genius, and one which has stood a surer and severer test. Envy has, then, some connection with a sense of justice — it is a defence against imposture and quackery. Though we do not willingly give up the secret and silent consciousness of our own worth to vapouring and false pretences, we do homage to the true candidate for fame when he appears, and even exult and take a pride in our capacity to appreciate the highest desert. This is one reason why we do not envy the dead — less because they are removed out of our way, than because all doubt and diversity of opinion is dismissed from the question of their title to veneration and respect. Our tongue, having a licence, grows wanton in their praise. We do not envy or stint our admiration of Rubens, because the mists of uncertainty or prejudice are withdrawn by the hand of time from the splendour of his works. Fame is to genius

> Like a gate of steel,
> Fronting the sun, receives and renders back
> His figure and his heat.

We give full and unbounded scope to our impressions when they are confirmed by successive generations, as we form our opinions coldly and slowly while we are afraid our judgment may be reversed by posterity. We trust the testimony of ages, for it is true; we are no longer in pain lest we should be deceived by varnish and tinsel, and feel assured that the praise and the

work are both sterling. In contemporary reputation, the greater and more transcendent the merit, the less is the envy attending it, which shows that this passion is not, after all, a mere barefaced hatred and detraction from acknowledged excellence. Mrs. Siddons was not an object of envy; her unrivalled powers defied competition or gainsayers. If Kean had a party against him, it was composed of those who could not or would not see his merits through his defects; and, in like manner, John Kemble's elevation to the tragic throne was not carried by loud and tumultuous acclamation, because the stately height which he attained was the gradual result of labour and study, and his style of acting did not flash with the inspiration of the god. We are backward to bestow a heaped measure of praise whenever there is any inaptitude or incongruity that acts to damp or throw a stumbling-block in the way of our enthusiasm. Hence the jealousy and dislike shown towards upstart wealth, as we cannot in our imaginations reconcile the former poverty of the possessors with their present magnificence—we despise fortune-hunters in ambition as well as in love—and hence, no doubt, one strong ground of hereditary right. We acquiesce more readily in an assumption of superiority that in the first place implies no merit (which is a great relief to the baser sort), and in the second, that baffles opposition by seeming a thing inevitable, taken for granted, and transmitted in the common course of nature. In contested elections, where the precedence is understood to be awarded to rank and title, there is observed to be less acrimony and obstinacy than when it is supposed to depend on individual merit and fitness for the office; no one willingly allows another more ability or honesty than himself, but he cannot deny that another may be better born. Learning, again, is more freely admitted than genius, because it is of a more positive quality, and is felt to be less essentially a part of a man's self; and with regard to the grosser and more invidious distinction of wealth, it may be difficult to substitute any finer test

of respectability for it, since it is hard to fathom the depth of a man's understanding, but the length of his purse is soon known; and besides there is a little collusion in the case.

The learned pate ducks to the golden fool.

We bow to a patron who gives us a good dinner and his countenance for our pains, and interest bribes and lulls envy asleep. The most painful kind of envy is the envy towards inferiors; for we cannot bear to think that a person (in other respects utterly insignificant) should have or seem to have an advantage over us in anything we have set our hearts upon, and it strikes at the very root of our self-love to be foiled by those we despise. There is some dignity in a contest with power and acknowledged reputation; but a triumph over the sordid and the mean is itself a mortification, while a defeat is intolerable.

ON THE SPIRIT OF PARTISANSHIP[1]

I have in my time known few thorough partisans, at least on my own side of the question. I conceive, however, that the honestest and strongest-minded men have been so. In general, interest, fear, vanity, the love of contradiction, even a scrupulous regard to truth and justice, come to divert them from the popular cause. It is a character that requires very opposite and almost incompatible qualities — reason and prejudice, a passionate attachment founded on an abstract idea. He who can take up a speculative question, and pursue it with the same zeal and unshaken constancy that he does his immediate interests or private animosities—he who is as faithful to his principles as he is to himself, is the true partisan. I do not here speak of the bigot, or the mercenary or cowardly tool of a party. There are plenty of this description of persons (a considerable majority of the inhabitants of every country)—who are 'ever strong upon the stronger side,' staunch, thorough-paced sticklers for their passions and prejudices, and who stand by their party as long as their party can stand by them. I speak of those who espouse a cause from liberal motives and with liberal views, and of the obstacles that are so often found to relax their perseverance or impair their zeal. These may, I think, be reduced chiefly to the heads of obligations to friends, of vanity, or the desire of the lead and distinction, to an over-squeamish delicacy in regard to appearances, to fickleness of purpose, or to natural timidity and weakness of nerve.

[1] 1820.

There is nothing more contemptible than party spirit in one point of view; and yet it seems inseparable in practice from public principle. You cannot support measures unless you support men; you cannot carry any point or maintain any system without acting in concert with others. In theory, it is all very well. We may refine in our distinctions, and elevate our language to what point we please. But in carrying the most sounding words and stateliest propositions into effect, we must make use of the instrumentality of men; and some of the alloy and imperfection of the means may insinuate itself into the end. If we do not go all lengths with those who are embarked with us in the same views; if we are not hearty in the defence of their interests and motives; if we are not fully in their confidence and they in ours; if we do not ingraft on the stock of public virtue the charities and sentiments of private affection and esteem; if the bustle and anxiety and irritation of the state affairs do not kindle into the glow of friendship, as well as patriotism; if we look distant, suspicious, lukewarm at one another; if we criticise, carp at, pry into the conduct of our party with watchful, jealous eyes; it is to be feared we shall play the game into the enemy's hands, and not co-operate together for the common good with all the steadiness and cordiality that might be wished. On the other hand, if we lend ourselves to the foibles and weaknesses of our friends; if we suffer ourselves to be implicated in their intrigues, their scrambles and bargainings for place and power; if we flatter their mistakes, and not only screen them from the eyes of others, but are blind to them ourselves; if we compromise a great principle in the softness of a womanish friendship; if we entangle ourselves in needless family ties; if we sell ourselves to the vices of a patron, or become the mouthpiece and echo of a *coterie;* we shall be in that case slaves of a faction, not servants of the public, nor shall we long have a spark of the old Roman or the old English virtue left. Good-nature, conviviality, hospitality, habits of acquaintance and

regard, favours received or conferred, spirit and eloquence to defend a friend when pressed hard upon, courtesy and good-breeding, are one thing—patriotism, firmness of principle, are another. The true patriot knows when to make each of these in turn give way to or control the other, in furtherance of the common good, just as the accomplished courtier makes all other interests, friendships, cabals, resentments, reconciliations, subservient to his attachment to the person of the king. He has the welfare of his country, the cause of mankind at heart, and makes that the scale in which all other motives are weighed as in a balance. With this inward prompter he knows when to speak and when to hold his tongue, when to temporise, and when to throw away the scabbard, when to make men of service to principles, and when to make principles the sole condition of popularity—nearly as well as if he had a title or a pension depending in reversion on his success: for it is true that 'in their generation the children of this world are wiser than the children of light.' In my opinion, Charles Fox had too much of what we mean by 'the milk of human kindness' to be a practical statesman, particularly in critical times, and with a cause of infinite magnitude at stake. He was too easy a friend, and too generous an enemy. He was willing to think better of those with whom he acted, or to whom he was opposed, than they deserved. He was the creature of temperament and sympathy, and suffered his feelings to be played upon, and to get the better of his principles, which were not of the most rigid kind—not 'stuff o' the conscience.' With all the power of the crown, and all the strongholds of prejudice and venality opposed to him, 'instead of a softness coming over the heart of a man,' he should (in such a situation) have 'turned to the stroke his adamantine scales that feared no discipline of human hands,' and made it a struggle *ad internecionem* on the one side, as it was on the other. There was no place for moderation, much less for huckstering and trimming. Mr. Burke saw the thing right enough. It was a question

about a principle—about the existence or extinction of human rights in the abstract. He was on the side of legitimate slavery; Mr. Fox on that of natural liberty. That was no reason he should be less bold or jealous in her defence, because he had everything to contend against. But he made too many coalitions, too many compromises with flattery, with friendship (to say nothing of the baits of power), not to falter and be defeated at last in the noble stand he had made for the principles of freedom.

Another sort are as much too captious and precise, as these are lax and *cullible* in their notions of political warfare. Their fault is an overweening egotism, as that of the former was too great a facility of temper. They will have everything their own way to the minutest tittle, or they cannot think of giving it their sanction and support. The cause must come to them, they will not go to the cause. They stand upon their punctilio. They have a character at stake, which is dearer to them than the whole world. They have an idea of perfect truth and beauty in their own minds, the contemplation of which is a never-failing source of delight and consolation to them,

> Though sun and moon were in the flat sea sunk,

and which they will not soil by mixing it up with the infirmities of any cause or any party. They will not, 'to do a great right, do a little wrong.' They will let the lofty pillar inscribed to human liberty fall to the ground sooner than extend a finger to save it, on account of the dust and cobwebs that cling to it. It is not this great and mighty object they are thinking of all the time, but their own fantastic reputation and puny pretensions. While the world is tumbling about our ears, and the last hold of liberty, the ark containing our birthright, the only possible barrier against barefaced tyranny, is tottering—instead of setting the engines and the mortal instruments at work to prop it, and fighting in the trenches to the last drop, they are washing their hands of all imaginary imperfections, and

looking in the glass of their own vanity, with an air of heightened self-complacency. Alas! they do not foresee the fatal consequences; they have an eye only to themselves. While all the power, the prejudice, and ignorance of mankind are drawn up in deadly array against the advance of truth and justice, they owe it to themselves, forsooth! to state the naked merits of the question (heat and passion apart), and pick out all the faults of which their own party has been guilty, to fling as a make-weight into the adversary's scale of unmeasured abuse and execration. They will not take their ready stand by the side of him who was 'the very arm and burgonet of man,' and like a demi-Atlas, could alone prop a declining world, because for themselves they have some objections to the individual instrument, and they think principles more important than persons. No, they think persons of more consequence than principles, and themselves most of all. They injure the principle through the person most able to protect it. They betray the cause by not defending it as it is attacked, tooth and nail, might and main, without exception and without remorse. When everything is at stake, dear and valuable to man, as man; when there is but the one dreadful alternative of entire loss, or final recovery of truth and freedom, it is no time to stand upon trifles and moot-points; the great object is to be secured first, and at all hazards.

But there is a third thing in their minds, a fanciful something which they prefer to both contending parties. It may be so; but neither they nor we can get it. We must have one of the two things imposed upon us, not by choice but by hard necessity. 'Our bane and antidote are both before us;' and if we do anything to neglect the one, we justly incur the heavy, intolerable, unredeemed penalty of the other. If our pride is stung, if we have received a blow or the lie in our own persons, we know well enough what to do: our blood is up, we have an actual feeling and object to satisfy; and we are not to be diverted from our purpose by sophistry or mere words. The quarrel is

personal to ourselves; and we feel the whole stress of it, rousing every faculty and straining every nerve. But if the quarrel is general to mankind; if it is one in which the rights, freedom, hopes, and happiness of the world are embarked; if we see the dignity of our common nature prostrate, trampled upon and mangled before the brute image of power, this gives us little concern; our reason may disapprove, but our passions, our prejudices, are not touched; and therefore our reason, our humanity, our abstract love of right (not 'screwed to the sticking-place' by some paltry interest of our own) are easily satisfied with any hollow professions of good-will, or put off with vague excuses, or staggered with open defiance. We are here, where a principle only is in danger, at leisure to calculate consequences, prudently for ourselves, or favourably for others: were it a point of honour (we think the honour of human nature is not our honour, that its disgrace is not our disgrace—we are not the *rabble!*) we should throw consideration and compassion to the dogs, and cry—'Away to heaven respective lenity, and fire-eyed fury be my conduct now!' But charity is cold. We are the dupes of the flatteries of our opponents, because we are indifferent to our own object: we stand in awe of their threats, because in the absence of passion we are tender of our persons. They beat us in courage and in intellect, because we have nothing but the common good to sharpen our faculties or goad our will; they have no less an alternative in view than to be uncontrolled masters of mankind, or to be hurled from high—

> To grinning scorn a sacrifice,
> And endless infamy!

They do not celebrate the triumphs of their enemies as their own: it is with them a more feeling disputation. They never give an inch of ground that they can keep; they keep all that they can get; they make no concessions that can redound to their own discredit; they assume all that makes for them; if they pause it is to gain time; if they offer terms it is to break them:

they keep no faith with enemies: if you relax in your exertions, they persevere the more: if you make new efforts, they redouble theirs. While they give no quarter, you stand upon mere ceremony. While they are cutting your throat, or putting the gag in your mouth, you talk of nothing but liberality, freedom of inquiry, and *douce humanité*. Their object is to destroy you, your object is to spare them—to treat them according to your own fancied dignity. They have sense and spirit enough to take all advantages that will further their cause: you have pedantry and pusillanimity enough to undertake the defence of yours, in order to defeat it. It is the difference between the efficient and the inefficient; and this again resolves itself into the difference between a speculative proposition and a practical interest.

One thing that makes tyrants bold is, that they have the power to justify their wrong. They lay their hands upon the sword, and ask who will dispute their commands. The friends of humanity and justice have not in general this ark of confidence to recur to, and can only appeal to reason and propriety. They oppose power on the plea of right and conscience; and shall they, in pursuance of their claims, violate in the smallest tittle what is due to truth and justice? So that the one have no law but their wills, and the absolute extent of their authority, in attaining or securing their ends, because they make no pretensions to scrupulous delicacy: the others are cooped and cabined in by all sorts of nice investigations in philosophy, and misgivings of the moral sense; that is, are deprived or curtailed of the means of succeeding in their ends, because those ends are not barefaced violence and wrong. It might as well be said that a man has a right to knock me on the head on the highway, and that I am only to use mildness and persuasion in return, as best suited to the justice of my cause; as that I am not to retaliate and make reprisals on the common enemies of mankind in their own style and mode of execution. Is not a man to defend his liberty, or the

liberties of his fellow men, as strenuously and remorselessly as he would his life or his purse? Men are Quakers in political principle, Turks and Jews in private conscience.

The whole is an error arising from confounding the distinction between theory and practice, between the still-life of letters and the tug and onset of contending factions. I might recommend to our political mediators the advice which Henry V. addressed to his soldiers on a critical occasion :—

> In peace there's nothing so becomes a man
> As modest stillness and humility;
> But when the blast of war blows in our ears,
> Then imitate the action of the tiger;
> Stiffen the sinews, summon up the blood,
> Disguise fair nature with hard-favour'd rage;
> Then lend the eye a terrible aspect;
> Let it pry through the portage of the head,
> Like the brass cannon: let the brow o'erwhelm it
> As fearfully as doth a galléd rock
> O'erhang and jutty his confounded base,
> Swill'd with the wild and wasteful ocean:
> Now set the teeth, and stretch the nostril wide;
> Hold hard the breath, and bend up every spirit
> To his full height.

So, in speculation refine as much as you please, intellectually and morally speaking, and you may do it with advantage. Reason is then the instrument you use, and you cannot raise the standard of perfection you fix upon and propose to others too high, or proceed with too much candour and moderation in the advancement of truth: but in practice you have not your choice of ends or means. You have two things to decide between, the extreme, probably, of an evil and a considerable good; and if you will not make your mind up to take the best of the two with all its disadvantages and drawbacks, you must be contented to take the worst: for as you cannot alter the state of the conflicting parties who are carrying their point by force, or dictate what is best by a word speaking; so by finding fault with the attainable good, and throwing cold water on it, you add fuel to your enemy's courage and assist his success. 'Those who are not for us are

against us.' You create a diversion in his favour, by distracting and enervating men's minds, as much as by questioning the general's orders, or drawing off a strong detachment in the heat of a battle. Political is like military warfare. There are but two sides; and after you have once chosen your party, it will not do to stand in the midway, and say you like neither. There is no other to like, in the eye of common sense, or in the practical and inevitable result of the thing. As active partisans, we must take up with the best we can get in the circumstances, and defend it with all our might against a worse cause (which will prevail, if this does not), instead of 'letting our frail thoughts dally with faint surmise'; or, while dreaming of an ideal perfection, we shall find ourselves surprised into the train, and gracing the triumph, of the common enemy. It is sufficient if our objects and principles are sound and disinterested. If we were engaged in a friendly contest, where integrity and fair dealing were the order of the day, our means might be as unimpeachable as our ends; but in a struggle with the passions, interests, and prejudices of men, right reason, pure intention, are hardly competent to carry us through: we want another stimulus. The vices may be opposed to each other sometimes with advantage and propriety. A little of the alloy of human frailty may be allowed to lend its aid to the service of humanity; and if we have only so much obstinacy or insensibility as enables us to persevere in the path of public duty with more determination and effect, both our motives and conduct will be above the ordinary standard of political morality. To suppose that we can do much more than this, or that we can set up our individual opinion of what is best in itself, or of the best means of attaining it, and be listened to by the world at large, is egregiously to overrate their docility or our own powers of persuasion.

It is the same want of a centripetal force, of a ruling passion, of a moral instinct of union and co-operation for a general purpose, that makes men fly off into knots and factions, and each set up for the leader of a

party himself. Where there is a strong feeling of interest at work, it reconciles and combines the most discordant materials, and fits them to their place in the social machine. But in the conduct and support of the public good, we see 'nothing but vanity, chaotic vanity.' There is no forbearance, no self-denial, no magnanimity of proceeding. Every one is seeking his own aggrandisement, or to supplant his neighbour, instead of advancing the popular cause. It is because they have no real regard for it but as it serves as a stalking horse to their ambition, restless inquietude, or love of cabal. They abuse and vilify their own party, just as they do the ministers.

> Each lolls his tongue out at the other,
> And shakes his empty noddle at his brother.

John Bull does not aim so maliciously, or hit so hard at Whigs and Reformers, as Cobbett. The reason is, that a very large proportion of these Marplots and regenerators of the world are actuated by no love of their species or zeal for a general question, but by envy, malice, and all uncharitableness. They are discontented with themselves and with everything about them. They object to, they dissent from, every measure. Nothing pleases their fastidious tastes. For want of something to exercise their ill-humour and troublesome officiousness upon, they abuse the government: when they are baulked or tired of this they fall foul of one another. The slightest slip or difference of opinion is never forgiven, but gives birth to a deadly feud. Touch but their petty self-importance, and out comes a flaming denunciation of their own cabal, and all they know about the individuals composing it. This is not patriotism but spleen—a want of something to do and to talk about—of sense, honesty, and feeling. To wreak their spite on an individual, they will ruin the cause, and serve up the friend and idol of the people sliced and carbonadoed, a delicious morsel to the other side. There is a strange want of keeping in this. They are true neither to themselves nor to their

principles. The Reformers are in general, it must be confessed, an ill-conditioned set; and they should be told of this infirmity that most easily besets them. When they find their gall and bitterness overflowing on the very persons who take the lead, and deservedly take the lead, in their affairs, for some slight flaw or misunderstanding, they should be taught to hold their tongues, or be drummed out of the regiment as spies and informers.

Trimming, and want of spirit to declare the honest truth, arise in part from the same source. When a man is not thoroughly convinced of an opinion, or where he does not feel a deep interest in it, he does not like to make himself obnoxious by avowing it; is willing to make all the allowance he can for difference of sentiment, and consults his own safety by retiring from a sinking cause. This is the very time when the genuine partisan, who has a rooted attachment to a principle, and feels it as a part of himself, finds himself most called upon to come forward in its support. His anxiety for truth and justice leaves him in no fear for himself, and the sincerity of his motives makes him regardless of censure or obloquy. His profession of hearty devotion to freedom was not an ebullition called forth by the sunshine of prosperity, a lure for popularity and public favour; and when these desert it, he still maintains his post with his integrity. There is a natural timidity of mind, also, which can never go the whole length of any opinion, but is always interlarding its qualified assent with unmeaning *buts* and *ifs;* as there is a levity and discursiveness of imagination which cannot settle finally in any belief, and requires a succession of glancing views, topics, and opposite conclusions, to satisfy its appetite for intellectual variety. I have known persons leave the cause of independence and freedom, not because they found it unprofitable, but because they found it flat and stale for want of novelty. At the same time, interest is a great stimulator; and perhaps the success of their early principles might have reconciled them to their embarrassing monotony. Few persons have strength

and simplicity of mind (without some additional inducement) to be always harping on the same string, or to put up with the legitimate variety to be found in an abstract principle, applicable to all emergencies. They like changeable silks better than lasting homespun. A sensible man once mentioned to me his having called on —— that morning, who entertained with him a *tirade* against the Bourbons for two hours; but he said he did not at all feel convinced that he might not have been writing ultra-royalist paragraphs for the ——, just before he came, in their favour, and only shifted his side of the argument, as a man who is tired of lying too long on one side of his body is glad to turn to the other. There was much shrewdness, and equal probability in this conjecture.

I think the spirit of partisanship is of use in a point of view that has not been distinctly adverted to. It serves as a conductor to carry off our antipathies and ill-blood in a quarter and a manner that is least hurtful to the general weal. A thorough partisan is a good hater; but he hates only one side of a question, and that the *outside*. His bigotry throws human nature into strong light and shade; he has his sympathies as well as his antipathies; it is not all black or a dull drab colour. He does not generalise in his contempt or disgust, or proceed from individuals to universals. He lays the faults and vices of mankind to the account of sects and parties, creeds and classes. Man in himself is a good sort of animal. It is the being a Tory or a Whig (as it may happen) that makes a man a knave or fool; but then we hardly look upon him as of the same species with ourselves. Kings are not arbitrary, nor priests hypocritical, because they are men, but because they are kings and priests. We form certain nominal abstractions of these classes, which the more we dislike them the less natural do they seem, and leave the general character of the species untouched, or act as a foil to it. There is nothing that is a greater damper to party spirit than to suggest that the errors and enormities of both sides arise from

certain inherent dispositions common to the species. It shocks the liberal and enlightened among us, to suppose that under any circumstances they could become bigots, tools, persecutors. They wipe their hands clean of all such aspersions. There is a great gulf of prejudice and passion placed between us and our opponents; and this is interpreted into a natural barrier and separation of sentiment and feeling. 'Our withers are unwrung.' Burke represented modern revolutionists to himself under the equivocal similitude of 'green-eyed, spring-nailed, velvet-pawed philosophers, whether going on two legs or on four'; and thus removed to a distance from his own person all the ill attributes with which he had complimented the thoroughbred metaphysician. By comparing the plausible qualities of a minister of state to the sleekness of the panther, I myself seem to have no more affinity with that whole genus, than with the whiskers and claws of that formidable and spirited animal. Bishop Taylor used to reprimand his rising pride by saying, at the sight of a reprobate, 'There goes my wicked self': we do not apply the same method politically, and say, 'There goes my Tory or my Jacobin self.' We suppose the two things incompatible. The Calvinist damns the Arminian, the Protestant the Papist, etc., but it is not for a difference of nature, but an opposition of opinion. The spirit of partisanship is not a spirit of our misanthropy. But for the vices and errors of example and institution, mankind are (on this principle) only a little lower than the angels; it is false doctrine and absurd prejudices that make demons of them. The only original sin is differing in opinion with us: of that they are curable like any occasional disorder, and the man comes out, from beneath the husk of his party and prejudices, pure and immaculate. Make proselytes of them, let them come over to our way of thinking, and they are a different race of beings quite. This is to be effected by the force of argument and the progress of knowledge. It is well, it is perfectly well. We cast the slough of our vices with the

shibboleth of our party ; a real Reform in Parliament would banish all knavery and folly from the land. It is not the same wretched little mischievous animal, man, that is alike under all denominations and all systems, and in whom different situations and notions only bring out different inherent, incorrigible vices and propensities ; but the professions and the theory being changed for the one which we think the only true and infallible one, the whole world, by the mere removal of our arbitrary prejudices and modes of thinking, would become as sincere, as benevolent, as independent, and as worthy people as we are ! To hate and proscribe half the species under various pretexts and nicknames, seems, therefore, the only way to entertain a good opinion of ourselves and mankind in general.

FOOTMEN

Footmen are no part of Christianity; but they are a very necessary appendage to our happy Constitution in Church and State. What would the bishop's mitre be without these grave supporters to his dignity? Even the plain presbyter does not dispense with his decent serving-man to stand behind his chair and load his duly emptied plate with beef and pudding, at which the genius of Ude turns pale. What would become of the coronet-coach filled with elegant and languid forms, if it were not for the triple row of powdered, laced, and liveried footmen, clustering, fluttering, and lounging behind it? What an idea do we not conceive of the fashionable *belle*, who is making the most of her time and tumbling over silks and satins within at Howell and James's, or at the Bazaar in Soho Square, from the tall lacquey in blue and silver with gold-headed cane, cocked-hat, white thread stockings, and large calves to his legs, who stands as her representative without! The sleek shopman appears at the door, at an understood signal the livery-servant starts from his position, the coach-door flies open, the steps are let down, the young lady enters the carriage as young ladies are taught to step into carriages, the footman closes the door, mounts behind, and the glossy vehicle rolls off, bearing its lovely burden and her gaudy attendant from the gaze of the gaping crowd! Is there not a spell in beauty, a charm in rank and fashion, that one would almost wish to be this fellow—to obey its nod, to watch its looks, to breathe but by its

permission, and to live but for its use, its scorn, or pride?

Footmen are in general looked upon as a sort of supernumeraries in society—they have no place assigned them in any Encyclopædia—they do not come under any of the heads in Mr. Mill's *Elements*, or Mr. Macculloch's *Principles of Political Economy*; and they nowhere have had impartial justice done them, except in Lady Booby's love for one of that order. But if not 'the Corinthian capitals of polished society,' they are 'a graceful ornament to the civil order.' Lords and ladies could not do without them. Nothing exists in this world but by contrast. A foil is necessary to make the plainest truths self-evident. It is the very insignificance, the nonentity, as it were, of the gentlemen of the cloth, that constitutes their importance, and makes them an indispensable feature in the social system, by setting off the pretensions of their superiors to the best advantage. What would be the good of having a will of our own, if we had not others about us who are deprived of all will of their own, and who wear a badge to say, 'I serve'? How can we show that we are the lords of the creation but by reducing others to the condition of machines, who never move but at the beck of our caprices? Is not the plain suit of the master wonderfully relieved by the borrowed trappings and mock finery of his servant? You see that man on horseback who keeps at some distance behind another, who follows him as his shadow, turns as he turns, and as he passes or speaks to him, lifts his hand to his hat and observes the most profound attention—what is the difference between these two men? The one is as well mounted, as well fed, is younger and seemingly in better health than the other; but between these two there are perhaps seven or eight classes of society each of whom is dependent on and trembles at the frown of the other—it is a nobleman and his lacquey. Let any one take a stroll towards the West End of the town, South Audley or Upper Grosvenor Streets; it is then he will feel himself first entering into the *beau*

ideal of civilised life, a society composed entirely of lords and footmen! Deliver me from the filth and cellars of St. Giles's, from the shops of Holborn and the Strand, from all that appertains to middle and to low life; and commend me to the streets with the straw at the doors and hatchments over head to tell us of those who are just born or who are just dead, and with groups of footmen lounging on the steps and insulting the passengers—it is then I feel the true dignity and imaginary pretensions of human nature realised! There is here none of the squalidness of poverty, none of the hardships of daily labour, none of the anxiety and petty artifice of trade; life's business is changed into a romance, a summer's dream, and nothing painful, disgusting, or vulgar intrudes. All is on a liberal and handsome scale. The true ends and benefits of society are here enjoyed and bountifully lavished, and all the trouble and misery banished, and not even allowed so much as to exist in thought. Those who would find the real Utopia, should look for it somewhere about Park Lane or Mayfair. It is there only any feasible approach to equality is made—for it is *like master like man.* Here, as I look down Curzon Street, or catch a glimpse of the taper spire of South Audley Chapel, or the family arms on the gate of Chesterfield House, the vista of years opens to me, and I recall the period of the triumph of Mr. Burke's *Reflections on the French Revolution*, and the overthrow of *The Rights of Man!* You do not, indeed, penetrate to the interior of the mansion where sits the stately possessor, luxurious and refined; but you draw your inference from the lazy, pampered, motley crew poured forth from his portals. This mealy-coated, moth-like, butterfly generation, seem to have no earthly business but to enjoy themselves. Their green liveries accord with the budding leaves and spreading branches of the trees in Hyde Park—they seem 'like brothers of the groves'—their red faces and powdered heads harmonise with the blossoms of the neighbouring almond trees, that shoot their sprays over old-fashioned brick

walls. They come forth like grasshoppers in June, as numerous and as noisy. They bask in the sun and laugh in your face. Not only does the master enjoy an uninterrupted leisure and tranquillity—those in his employment have nothing to do. He wants drones, not drudges, about him, to share his superfluity, and give a haughty pledge of his exemption from care. They grow sleek and wanton, saucy and supple. From being independent of the world, they acquire the look of *gentlemen's gentlemen*. There is a cast of the aristocracy, with a slight shade of distinction. The saying, 'Tell me your company, and I'll tell you your manners,' may be applied *cum grano salis* to the servants in great families. Mr. Northcote knew an old butler who had lived with a nobleman so long, and had learnt to imitate his walk, look, and way of speaking so exactly that it was next to impossible to tell them apart. See the porter in the great leather chair in the hall—how big, and burly, and self-important he looks; while my Lord's gentleman (the politician of the family) is reading the second edition of *The Courier* (once more in request) at the side window, and the footman is romping, or taking tea with the maids in the kitchen below. A match-girl meanwhile plies her shrill trade at the railing; or a gipsy woman passes with her rustic wares through the street, avoiding the closer haunts of the city. What a pleasant farce is that of *High Life Below Stairs!* What a careless life do the domestics of the great lead! For, not to speak of the reflected self-importance of their masters and mistresses, and the contempt with which they look down on the herd of mankind, they have only to eat and drink their fill, talk the scandal of the neighbourhood, laugh at the follies, or assist the intrigues of their betters, till they themselves fall in love, marry, set up a public-house (the only thing they are fit for), and without habits of industry, resources in themselves, or self-respect, and drawing fruitless comparisons with the past, are, of all people, the most miserable! Service is no inheritance; and when it fails, there is not a more helpless, or more

worthless set of devils in the world. Mr. C—— used to say he should like to be a footman to some elderly lady of quality, to carry her prayer-book to church, and place her bassock right for her. There can be no doubt that this would have been better, and quite as useful as the life he has led, dancing attendance on Prejudice, but flirting with Paradox in such a way as to cut himself out of the old lady's will. For my part, if I had to choose, I should prefer the service of a young mistress, and might share the fate of the footmen recorded in heroic verse by Lady Wortley Montagu. Certainly it can be no hard duty, though a sort of *forlorn hope*, to have to follow three sisters, or youthful friends (resembling the three Graces), at a slow pace, and with grave demeanour, from Cumberland Gate to Kensington Gardens—to be there shut out, a privation enhancing the privilege, and making the sense of distant, respectful, idolatrous admiration more intense —and then, after a brief interval lost in idle chat, or idler reverie, to have to follow them back again, observing, not observed, to keep within call, to watch every gesture, to see the breeze play with the light tresses or lift the morning robe aside, to catch the half-suppressed laugh, and hear the low murmur of indistinct words and wishes, like the music of the spheres. An *amateur footman* would seem a more rational occupation than that of an amateur author, or an amateur artist. An insurmountable barrier, if it excludes passion, does not banish sentiment, but draws an atmosphere of superstitious, trembling apprehension round the object of so much attention and respect; nothing makes women seem so much like angels as always to see, never to converse with them; and those whom he has to dangle a cane after, must, to a lacquey of any spirit, appear worthy to wield sceptres.

But of all situations of this kind, the most enviable is that of a lady's maid in a family travelling abroad. In the obtuseness of foreigners to the nice gradations of English refinement and manners, the maid has not seldom a chance of being taken for the mistress—a

circumstance never to be forgot! See our Abigail mounted in the *dickey* with John, snug and comfortable, setting out on the grand tour as fast as four horses can carry her, whirled over the 'vine-covered hills and gay regions of France,' crossing the Alps and Apennines in breathless terror and wonder—frightened at a precipice, laughing at her escape—coming to the inn, going into the kitchen to see what is to be had—not speaking a word of the language, except what she picks up 'as pigeons pick up peas':—the bill paid, the passport *visé*, the horses put to, and *en route* again—seeing everything, and understanding nothing, in a full tide of health, fresh air, and animal spirits, and without one qualm of taste or sentiment, and arriving at Florence, the city of palaces, with its amphitheatre of hills and olives, without suspecting that such persons as Boccaccio, Dante, or Galileo, had ever lived there, while her young mistress is puzzled with the varieties of the Tuscan dialect, is disappointed in the Arno, and cannot tell what to make of the statue of David by Michael Angelo, in the Great Square. The difference is, that the young lady, on her return, has something to think of; but the maid absolutely forgets everything, and is only giddy and out of breath, as if she had been up in a balloon.

> No more: where ignorance is bliss,
> 'Tis folly to be wise!

English servants abroad, notwithstanding the comforts they enjoy, and though travelling as it were *en famille*, must be struck with the ease and familiar footing on which foreigners live with their domestics, compared with the distance and reserve with which they themselves are treated. The *bonne* sits down in the room, or walks abreast with you in the street; and the valet, who waits behind his master's chair at table, gives Monsieur his advice or opinion without being asked for it. We need not wonder at this familiarity and freedom, when we consider that those who allowed it could (formerly, at least, when the custom began) send

those who transgressed but in the smallest degree to the Bastille or the galleys at their pleasure. The licence was attended with perfect impunity. With us the law leaves less to discretion; and by interposing a real independence (and plea of right) between the servant and master, does away with the appearance of it on the surface of manners. The insolence and tyranny of the Aristocracy fell more on the tradespeople and mechanics than on their domestics, who were attached to them by a semblance of feudal ties. Thus, an upstart lady of quality (an imitator of the old school) would not deign to speak to a milliner while fitting on her dress, but gave her orders to her waiting-women to tell her what to do. Can we wonder at twenty *reigns of terror* to efface such a feeling?

I have alluded to the inclination in servants in great houses to ape the manners of their superiors, and to their sometimes succeeding. What facilitates the metamorphosis is, that the Great, in their character of *courtiers*, are a sort of footmen in their turn. There is the same crouching to interest and authority in either case, with the same surrender or absence of personal dignity—the same submission to the trammels of outward form, with the same suppression of inward impulses—the same degrading finery, the same pretended deference in the eye of the world, and the same lurking contempt from being admitted behind the scenes, the same heartlessness, and the same eye-service—in a word, they are alike puppets governed by motives not their own, machines made of coarser or finer materials. It is not, therefore, surprising, if the most finished courtier of the day cannot, by a vulgar eye, be distinguished from a gentleman's servant. M. de Bausset, in his amusing and excellent *Memoirs*, makes it an argument of the legitimacy of Napoleon's authority, that from denying it, it would follow that his lords of the bed-chamber were valets, and he himself (as prefect of the palace) no better than head cook. The inference is logical enough. According to the author's view, there was no other difference between

the retainers of the court and the kitchen than the rank of the master!

I remember hearing it said that 'all men were equal but footmen.' But of all footmen the lowest class is *literary footmen*. These consist of persons who, without a single grain of knowledge, taste, or feeling, put on the livery of learning, mimic its phrases by rote, and are retained in its service by dint of quackery and assurance alone. As they have none of the essence, they have all the externals of men of gravity and wisdom. They walk with a peculiar strut, thrust themselves into the acquaintance of persons they hear talked of, get introduced into the clubs, are seen reading books they do not understand at the Museum and public libraries, dine (if they can) with lords or officers of the Guards, abuse any party as *low* to show what fine gentlemen they are, and the next week join the same party to raise their own credit and gain a little consequence, give themselves out as wits, critics, and philosophers (and as they have never done anything, no man can contradict them), and have a great knack of turning editors, and not paying their contributors. If you get five pounds from one of them, he never forgives it. With the proceeds thus appropriated, the bookworm graduates a dandy, hires expensive apartments, sports a tandem, and it is inferred that he must be a great author who can support such an appearance with his pen, and a great genius who can conduct so many learned works while his time is devoted to the gay, the fair, and the rich. This introduces him to new editorship, to new and more select friendships, and to more frequent and importunate demands from debts and duns. At length the bubble bursts and disappears, and you hear no more of our classical adventurer, except from the invectives and self-reproaches of his dupes. Such a candidate for literary honours bears the same relation to the man of letters that the valet, with his second-hand finery and servile airs, does to his master.

A CHAPTER ON EDITORS

Editors are a 'sort of *tittle-tattle*'—difficult to deal with, dangerous to discuss. They in general partake of the usual infirmity of human nature, and of persons placed in high and honorary situations. Like other individuals raised to authority, they are chosen to fill a certain post for qualities useful or ornamental to the *reading public*; but they soon fancy that the situation has been invented for their own honour and profit, and sink the use in the abuse. Kings are not the only servants of the public who imagine that they are the *state*. Editors are but men, and easily 'lay the flattering unction to their souls' that they *are* the Magazine, the Newspaper, or the Review they conduct. They have got a little power in their hands, and they wish to employ that power (as all power is employed) to increase the sense of self-importance; they borrow a certain dignity from their situation as arbiters and judges of taste and elegance, and they are determined to keep it to the detriment of their employers and of every one else. They are dreadfully afraid there should be anything behind the Editor's chair, greater than the Editor's chair. That is a scandal to be prevented at all risks. The publication they are entrusted with for the amusement and edification of the town, they convert, in theory and practice, into a stalking horse of their own vanity, whims, and prejudices. They cannot write a whole work themselves, but they take care that the whole is such as they might have written: it is to have the Editor's mark, like the

broad R, on every page, or the N. N. at the Tuileries; it is to bear the same image and superscription—every line is to be upon oath: nothing is to be differently conceived or better expressed than the Editor could have done it. The whole begins in vanity, and ends too often in dulness and insipidity.

It is utterly impossible to persuade an Editor that he is nobody. As Mr. Horne Tooke said, on his trial for a libel before Lord Kenyon, 'There are two parties in this cause—myself and the jury; the judge and the crier of the court attend in their respective places': so, in every periodical miscellany, there are two essential parties—the writers and the public; the Editor and the printer's devil are merely the mechanical instruments to bring them together. There is a secret consciousness of this on the part of the Conductor of the Literary Diligence, that his place is one for show and form rather than use; and as he cannot maintain his pretended superiority by what he does himself, he thinks to arrive at the same end by hindering others from doing their best. The 'dog-in-the-manger' principle comes into full play. If an article has nothing to recommend it, is one of no mark or likelihood, it goes in; there is no offence in it. If it is likely to strike, to draw attention, to make a noise, then every syllable is scanned, every objection is weighed: if grave, it is too grave; if witty, it is too witty. One way or other, it might be better; and while this nice point is pending, it gives place, as a matter of course, to something that there is no question about.

The responsibility, the delicacy, the nervous apprehension of the Editor, naturally increase with the probable effect and popularity of the contributions on which he has to pass judgment; and the nearer an effusion approaches to perfection, the more fatal is a single flaw, or its falling short of that superhuman standard by a hair's-breadth difference, to its final reception. If people are likely to ask, 'Who wrote a certain paper in the last number of ——?' the Editor

is bound, as a point of honour, to baulk that impertinent curiosity on the part of the public. He would have it understood that all the articles are equally good, and may be equally his own. If he inserts a paper of more than the allowed average merit, his next care is to spoil by revising it. The sting, with the honey, is sure to be left out. If there is anything that pleased you in the writing, you look in vain for it in the proof. What might electrify the reader, startles the Editor. With a paternal regard for the interests of the public, he takes care that their tastes should not be pampered, and their expectations raised too high, by a succession of fine passages, of which it is impossible to continue a supply. He interposes between the town and their vicious appetite for the piquant and high-seasoned, as we forbid children to indulge in sweetmeats. The trite and superficial are always to be had *to order*, and present a beautiful uniformity of appearance. There is no unexpected relief, no unwelcome inequality of style, to disorder the nerves, or perplex the understanding: the reader may read, and smile, and sleep, without meeting a single idea to break his repose.

Some Editors, moreover, have a way of altering the first paragraph: they have then exercised their privileges, and let you alone for the rest of the chapter. This is like paying 'a pepper-corn rent,' or making one's bow on entering a room: it is being let off cheap. Others add a pointless conclusion of their own: it is like signing their names to the article. Some have a passion for sticking in the word *however* at every opportunity, in order to impede the march of the style; and others are contented and take great pains (with Lindley Murray's Grammar lying open before them) to alter 'if it *is*' into 'if it *be*.' An Editor abhors an ellipsis. If you fling your thoughts into continued passages, they set to work to cut them up into short paragraphs: if you make frequent breaks, they turn the tables on you that way, and throw the whole composition into masses. Anything to preserve the form and appearance of power, to make the work

their own by mental stratagem, to stamp it by some fiction of criticism with their personal identity, to enable them to run away with the credit, and look upon themselves as the master-spirits of the work and of the age! If there is any point they do not understand, they are sure to meddle with it, and mar the sense; for it piques their self-love, and they think they are bound *ex-officio* to know better than the writer. Thus they substitute (at a venture, and merely for the sake of altering) one epithet for another, when perhaps the same word has occurred just before, and produces a cruel tautology, never considering the trouble you have taken to compare the context and vary the phraseology.

Editors have no misplaced confidence in the powers of their contributors: they think by the supposition they must be in the right from a single supercilious glance—and you in the wrong, after poring over a subject for a month. There are Editors who, if you insert the name of a popular actor, strike it out, and, in virtue of their authority, insert a favourite of their own—as a dexterous attorney substitutes the name of a friend in a will. Some Editors will let you praise nobody; others will let you blame nobody. The first excites their jealousy of contemporary merit; the last excites their fears, and they do not like to make enemies. Some insist upon giving no opinion at all, and observe an *unarmed neutrality* as to all parties and persons: it is no wonder the world think very little of them in return. Some Editors stand upon their characters for this; others for that. Some pique themselves upon being genteel and well-dressed; others on being moral and immaculate, and do not perceive that the public never trouble their heads about the matter. I knew one Editor who openly discarded all regard to character and decency, and who throve by the dissolution of partnership, if indeed the articles were ever drawn up. Some Editors drink tea with a set of *blue-stockings* and literary ladies: not a whisper, not a breath that might blow away those fine cobwebs of the brain—

> More subtle web Arachne cannot spin;
> Nor those fine threads which oft we woven see
> Of scorched dew, do not in the air more lightly flee!

Others dine with Lords and Academicians—for God's sake, take care what you say! Would you strip the Editor's mantel-piece of the cards of invitation that adorn it to select parties for the next six months? An Editor takes a turn in St. James's Street, and is congratulated by the successive literary or political groups on all he does not write; and when the mistake is found out, the true Simon Pure is dismissed. We have heard that it was well said by the proprietor of a leading journal, that he would take good care never to write a line in his own paper, as he had conflicting interests enough to manage, without adding literary jealousies to the number. On the other hand, a very good-natured and warm-hearted individual declared, 'he would never have another man of talent for an Editor' (the Editor, in this case, is to the proprietor as the author to the Editor), 'for he was tired of having their good things thrust in his teeth.' Some Editors are scrubs, mere drudges, newspaper puffs; others are bullies or quacks; others are nothing at all—they have the name, and receive a salary for it! A literary sinecure is at once lucrative and highly respectable. At Lord's Ground there are some old hands that are famous for *blocking out and staying in*: it would seem that some of our literary veterans had taken a lesson from their youthful exercises at Harrow or Eton.

All this is bad enough; but the worst is, that Editors, besides their own failings, have *friends* who aggravate and take advantage of them. These self-styled friends are the nightshade and hemlock clinging to the work, preventing its growth and circulation, and dropping a slumberous poison from its jaundiced leaves. They form a *cordon*, an opaque mass round the Editor, and persuade him that they are the support, the prop, and pillar of his reputation. They get between him and the public, and shut out the light,

and set aside common sense. They pretend anxiety for the interest of some established organ of opinion, while all they want is to make it the organ of their dogmas, prejudices, or party. They want to be the Magazine or the Review—to wield that power covertly, to warp that influence to their own purposes. If they cannot do this, they care not if it sinks or swims. They prejudge every question—fly-blow every writer who is not of their own set. A friend of theirs has three articles in the last number of ——; they strain every nerve and make pressing instances to throw a slur on a popular contribution by another hand, in order that he may write a fourth in the next number. The short articles which are read by the vulgar, are cut down to make room for the long ones, which are read by nobody but the writers and their friends. If an opinion is expressed contrary to the shibboleth of the party, it is represented as an outrage on decency and public opinion, when in truth the public are delighted with the candour and boldness displayed. They would convert the most valuable and spirited journal into a dull pamphleteer, stuffed with their own lucubrations on certain heavy topics. The self-importance of these people is in proportion to their insignificance; and what they cannot do by an appeal to argument or sound policy, they effect by importunity and insinuation. They keep the Editor in continual alarm as to what will be said of him by the public, when in fact the public will think (in nine cases out of ten) just what he tells them.

These people create much of the mischief. An Editor should have no friends—his only prompter should be the number of copies of the work that sell. It is superfluous to strike off a large impression of a work for those few squeamish persons who prefer lead to tinsel. Principle and good manners are barriers that are, in our estimate, inviolable: the rest is open to popular suffrage, and is not to be prejudged by a *coterie* with closed doors. Another difficulty lies here. An Editor should, in one sense, be a respectable man—

a distinguished character; otherwise he cannot lend his name and sanction to the work. But 'here's the rub'—that one so graced and gifted can neither have his time nor his thoughts to himself. He who dines out loses his free agency. He may improve in politeness, he falls off in the pith and pungency of his style. A poem is dedicated to the son of the Muses: can the critic do otherwise than praise it? A tragedy is brought out by a noble friend and patron: the severe rules of the drama must yield in some measure to the amenities of private life. On the contrary, Mr. —— is a garretteer—a person that nobody knows; his work has nothing but the *contents* to recommend it; it sinks into obscurity, or addresses itself to the *canaille*. An Editor, then, should be an abstraction—a being in the clouds—a mind without a body—reason without passion.—But where find such a one?

THE END

The World's Classics

(SIZE 6 × 4 INCHES)

ORDINARY EDITION

Published in NINE different styles:—

Cloth Boards, gilt back	1/– net
Sultan-red Leather, limp, gilt top	1/6 net
Buckram, paper label, gilt top	1/6 net
Quarter Parchment, gilt top	1/8 net
Lambskin, limp, gilt top	2/– net
Quarter Vellum, hand-tooled, panelled lettering-piece, gilt top. Superior library style	4/– net
Half Calf, marbled edges	4/– net
Whole Calf, marbled edges	5/6 net
Tree Calf, marbled edges	5/6 net

POCKET EDITION

of THE WORLD'S CLASSICS (each with a portrait) is being printed on THIN PAPER, by means of which the bulk of the stouter volumes is reduced by one-half.

Limp Cloth, gilt back, gilt top	1/– net
Sultan-red Leather, limp, gilt top	1/6 net
Quarter Vellum, hand-tooled, panelled lettering-piece, gilt top	4/– net

OF ALL BOOKSELLERS

HENRY FROWDE
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS
LONDON, NEW YORK, TORONTO & MELBOURNE

The World's Classics

THE best recommendation of **The World's Classics** is the books themselves, which have earned unstinted praise from critics and all classes of the public. Some two million copies have been sold, and of the 162 volumes published nearly one-half have gone into a second, third, fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh, or eighth impression. It is only possible to give so much for the money when large sales are certain. The absolute uniformity throughout the series, the clearness of the type, the quality of the paper, the size of the page, the printing, and the binding —from the cheapest to the best—cannot fail to commend themselves to all who love good literature presented in worthy form. That a high standard is insisted upon is proved by the list of books already published and of those on the eve of publication. A great feature is the brief critical introductions written by leading authorities of the day. The volumes of The World's Classics are obtainable in a number of different styles, the description and prices of which are given on page 1; but special attention may be called to the sultan-red, limp leather style, which is unsurpassable in leather bindings at the price of 1/6 net.

The **Pocket Edition** is printed on **thin opaque paper**, by means of which the bulk is greatly reduced, and the volumes marked with an asterisk are now ready in this form.

July, 1911.

The World's Classics

List of Titles

*1. **Charlotte Brontë's Jane Eyre.** Fourth Impression.
*2. **Lamb's Essays of Elia.** Fifth Impression.
*3. **Tennyson's Poems, 1830-1865.** With an Introduction by T. H. WARREN. Sixth Impression.
*4. **Goldsmith's Vicar of Wakefield.** Third Impression.
*5. **Hazlitt's Table-Talk.** Fourth Impression.
*6. **Emerson's Essays.** 1st and 2nd Series. Fifth Impression.
*7. **Keats's Poems.** Third Impression.
*8. **Dickens's Oliver Twist.** With 24 Illustrations by George Cruikshank. Third Impression.
*9. **Barham's Ingoldsby Legends.** Fourth Impression.
*10. **Emily Brontë's Wuthering Heights.** Third Imp.
*11. **Darwin's Origin of Species.** Fourth Impression.
*12. **Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress.** Second Impression.
*13. **English Songs and Ballads.** Compiled by T. W. H CROSLAND. Third Impression.
*14. **Charlotte Brontë's Shirley.** Third Impression.
*15. **Hazlitt's Sketches and Essays.** Third Impression.
*16. **Herrick's Poems.** Second Impression.
*17. **Defoe's Robinson Crusoe.** Second Impression.
*18. **Pope's Iliad of Homer.** Third Impression.
*19. **Carlyle's Sartor Resartus.** Third Impression.
20. **Swift's Gulliver's Travels.** Second Impression.
*21. **Poe's Tales of Mystery and Imagination.** Third Imp.
*22. **White's Natural History of Selborne.** Second Imp.
*23. **De Quincey's Opium Eater.** Third Impression.
*24. **Bacon's Essays.** Third Impression.
*25. **Hazlitt's Winterslow.** Second Impression.
26. **Hawthorne's Scarlet Letter.** Second Impression.
*27. **Macaulay's Lays of Ancient Rome.** Second Impression
*28. **Thackeray's Henry Esmond.** Third Impression.
29. **Scott's Ivanhoe.** Second Impression.
*30. **Emerson's English Traits, and Representative Men.** Second Impression.
*31. **George Eliot's Mill on the Floss.** Third Impression.
*32. **Selected English Essays.** Chosen and Arranged by W. PEACOCK. Eighth Impression.

The World's Classics

List of Titles (*continued*)

33. **Hume's Essays.** Second Impression.
*34. **Burns's Poems.** Second Impression.
*35, *44, *51, *55, *64, *69, *74. **Gibbon's Roman Empire.** Seven Vols., with Maps. Vols. I, II, Third Impression. III–V, Second Impression.
*36. **Pope's Odyssey of Homer.** Second Impression.
*37. **Dryden's Virgil.** Second Impression.
*38. **Dickens's Tale of Two Cities.** Third Impression.
*39. **Longfellow's Poems.** Vol. I. Second Impression.
*40. **Sterne's Tristram Shandy.** Second Impression.
*41, *48, *53. **Buckle's History of Civilization in England.** Three Vols. Vol. I, Third Imp. Vols. II and III, Second Imp.
*42, *56, *76. **Chaucer's Works.** From the Text of Prof. SKEAT. Three Vols. Vol. I, Second Impression.
*43. **Machiavelli's The Prince.** Translated by LUIGI RICCI. Second Impression.
*45. **English Prose from Mandeville to Ruskin.** Chosen and arranged by W. PEACOCK. Third Impression.
*46. **Essays and Letters by Leo Tolstoy.** Translated by AYLMER MAUDE. Third Impression.
*47. **Charlotte Brontë's Villette.** Second Impression.
*49. **À Kempis's Of the Imitation of Christ.** Second Imp.
*50. **Thackeray's Book of Snobs, and Sketches and Travels in London.** Second Impression.
*52. **Watts-Dunton's Aylwin.** Third Impression.
*54, *59. **Adam Smith's Wealth of Nations.** Two Vols. Second Impression.
*57. **Hazlitt's Spirit of the Age.** Second Impression.
*58. **Robert Browning's Poems.** Vol. I. Second Impression.
*60. **The Thoughts of Marcus Aurelius.** A new translation by JOHN JACKSON. Second Impression.
*61. **Holmes's Autocrat of the Breakfast-Table.** Second Impression.
*62. **Carlyle's On Heroes and Hero-Worship.** Second Impression.
*63. **George Eliot's Adam Bede.** Second Impression.
*65, *70, *77. **Montaigne's Essays.** Florio's trans. 3 Vols.
*66. **Borrow's Lavengro.** Second Impression.
*67. **Anne Brontë's Tenant of Wildfell Hall.**
*68. **Thoreau's Walden.** Intro. by T. WATTS-DUNTON.

The World's Classics

List of Titles (*continued*)

*71, *81, *111-*114. **Burke's Works.** Six Vols. With Prefaces by JUDGE WILLIS, F. W. RAFFETY, and R. H. WILLIS.

*72. **Twenty-three Tales by Tolstoy.** Tr. by L. and A. MAUDE Second Impression.

*73. **Borrow's Romany Rye.**

*75. **Borrow's Bible in Spain.**

*78. **Charlotte Brontë's The Professor,** and the **Poems of C., E., and A. Brontë.** Intro. by T. WATTS-DUNTON.

*79. **Sheridan's Plays.** Introduction by JOSEPH KNIGHT.

*80. **George Eliot's Silas Marner, The Lifted Veil, Brother Jacob.** Intro. by T. WATTS-DUNTON.

*82. **Defoe's Captain Singleton.** With an Introduction by THEODORE WATTS-DUNTON.

*83, *84. **Johnson's Lives of the Poets.** With an Introduction by ARTHUR WAUGH. Two Vols.

*85. **Matthew Arnold's Poems.** With an Introduction by Sir A. T. QUILLER-COUCH.

*86. **Mrs. Gaskell's Mary Barton.** With an Introduction by CLEMENT SHORTER.

*87. **Hood's Poems.** Edited by WALTER JERROLD.

*88. **Mrs. Gaskell's Ruth.** Intro. by CLEMENT SHORTER.

*89. **Holmes's Professor at the Breakfast-Table.** With an Introduction by Sir W. ROBERTSON NICOLL.

*90. **Smollett's Travels through France and Italy.** With an Introduction by T. SECCOMBE.

*91, *92. **Thackeray's Pendennis.** Intro. by E. GOSSE. 2 Vols.

*93. **Bacon's Advancement of Learning,** and **The New Atlantis.** With an Introduction by PROFESSOR CASE.

*94. **Scott's Lives of the Novelists.** With an Introduction by AUSTIN DOBSON.

*95. **Holmes's Poet at the Breakfast-Table.** With an Introduction by Sir W. ROBERTSON NICOLL.

*96, *97, *98. **Motley's Rise of the Dutch Republic.** With an Introduction by CLEMENT SHORTER. Three Vols.

*99. **Coleridge's Poems.** Intro. by Sir A. T. QUILLER-COUCH.

*100-*108. **Shakespeare's Plays and Poems.** With a Preface by A. C. SWINBURNE, a Note by T. WATTS-DUNTON on the special typographical features of this edition, and Introductions to the several plays by E. DOWDEN. Nine Volumes. Vols. 1-6 now ready. Vols. 7-9 ready shortly.

The World's Classics

List of Titles (*continued*)

*109. **George Herbert's Poems.** Intro. by ARTHUR WAUGH.

*110. **Mrs. Gaskell's Cranford, and The Moorland Cottage.** With an Introduction by CLEMENT SHORTER.

*115. **Essays and Sketches by Leigh Hunt.** With an Introduction by R. BRIMLEY JOHNSON.

*116. **Sophocles. The Seven Plays.** Translated into English Verse by Professor LEWIS CAMPBELL.

*117. **Aeschylus. The Seven Plays.** Translated into English Verse by Professor LEWIS CAMPBELL.

*118. **Horae Subsecivae.** By Dr. JOHN BROWN. With an Introduction by AUSTIN DOBSON.

*119. **Cobbold's Margaret Catchpole.** With an Introduction by CLEMENT SHORTER.

*120, *121. **Dickens's Pickwick Papers.** With 43 illustrations by Seymour and 'Phiz'. Two Vols.

*122. **Mrs. Caudle's Curtain Lectures, and other Stories and Essays,** by DOUGLAS JERROLD. With an Introduction by WALTER JERROLD, and 90 illustrations.

*123. **Goldsmith's Poems.** Edited by AUSTIN DOBSON.

*124. **Hazlitt's Lectures on the English Comic Writers.** With an Introduction by R. BRIMLEY JOHNSON.

*125, *126. **Carlyle's French Revolution.** With an Introduction by C. R. L. FLETCHER. Two Vols.

*127. **Horne's New Spirit of the Age.** With an Introduction by WALTER JERROLD.

*128. **Dickens's Great Expectations.** 6 Illus. by W. GOBLE.

*129. **Jane Austen's Emma.** Intro. by E. V. LUCAS.

*130, *131. **Don Quixote.** Jervas's translation. With an Intro. and Notes by J. FITZMAURICE-KELLY. Two Vols.

*132. **Leigh Hunt's The Town.** With an Introduction and Notes by AUSTIN DOBSON, and a Frontispiece.

*133. **Palgrave's Golden Treasury,** with additional Poems. Fifth Impression.

*134. **Aristophanes. Frere's translation of the Acharnians, Knights, Birds, and Frogs.** With an Introduction by W. W. MERRY.

*135. **Marlowe's Dr. Faustus,** and **Goethe's Faust,** Part I (Anster's Translation). Intro. by A. W. WARD.

*136. **Butler's Analogy.** Ed. W. E. GLADSTONE.

The World's Classics

List of Titles (*continued*)

*137. **Browning's Poems.** Vol. II (Dramatic Lyrics and Romances, Men and Women, and Dramatis Personae).

*138. **Cowper's Letters.** Selected, with an Introduction, by E. V. LUCAS.

*139. **Gibbon's Autobiography.** With Intro. by J. B. BURY.

*140. **Trollope's The Three Clerks.** With an Introduction by W. TEIGNMOUTH SHORE.

*141. **Anne Brontë's Agnes Grey.**

*142. **Fielding's Journal of a Voyage to Lisbon.** With Intro. and Notes by AUSTIN DOBSON, and 2 Illustrations.

*143. **Wells's Joseph and his Brethren.** Introduction by A. C. SWINBURNE, and a Note on Rossetti and Charles Wells by THEODORE WATTS-DUNTON.

*144. **Carlyle's Life of John Sterling.** With an Introduction by W. HALE WHITE.

*145. **Ruskin's Sesame and Lilies,** and **The Ethics of the Dust.** Ruskin House edition.

*146. **Ruskin's Time and Tide,** and **The Crown of Wild Olive.** Ruskin House edition.

*147. **Ruskin's A Joy for Ever,** and **The Two Paths.** With 12 Illustrations. Ruskin House edition.

*148. **Ruskin's Unto this Last,** and **Munera Pulveris.** Ruskin House edition.

*149. **Reynolds's Discourses.** Intro. AUSTIN DOBSON.

*150. **Washington Irving's Conquest of Granada**

*151, *152. **Lesage's Gil Blas.** (Smollett's translation.) Intro. and Notes by J. FITZMAURICE-KELLY. Two Vols.

*153. **Carlyle's Past and Present.** Introduction by G. K. CHESTERTON.

*154. **Mrs. Gaskell's North and South.** Introduction by CLEMENT SHORTER.

*155. **George Eliot's Scenes of Clerical Life.** Intro. by ANNIE MATHESON.

*156. **Mrs. Gaskell's Sylvia's Lovers.** Introduction by CLEMENT SHORTER.

*157. **Mrs. Gaskell's Wives and Daughters.** Introduction by CLEMENT SHORTER.

*158. **Lord Dufferin's Letters from High Latitudes.** Illustrated. Introduction by R. W. MACAN.

The World's Classics

List of Titles (*continued*)

159. **Grant's Captain of the Guard.**
160. **Marryat's Mr. Midshipman Easy.**
161. **Jane Porter's The Scottish Chiefs.**
162. **Ainsworth's The Tower of London.**
163. **Cooper's The Last of the Mohicans.**
164. **Marryat's The King's Own.** With 6 Illustrations by WARWICK GOBLE.
*165. **Lytton's Harold.** With 6 Illustrations by CHARLES BURTON.
166. **Mayne Reid's The Rifle Rangers.** With 6 Illustrations by J. E. SUTCLIFFE.
167. **Mayne Reid's The Scalp Hunters.** With 6 Illustrations by A. H. COLLINS.
*168. **Mrs. Gaskell's Cousin Phillis, and other Tales, &c.** With an Introduction by CLEMENT SHORTER.
*169. **Southey's Letters.** Selected, with an Introduction, and Notes by MAURICE H. FITZGERALD. [*In preparation.*

Other volumes in preparation.

Bookcases

In Two Sizes

i. **To hold 50 Volumes** ordinary paper, or 100 Volumes thin paper, World's Classics size.

In Fumed Oak, with two fixed shelves. Size 22 × 21½ × 4¾ inches. Price 5*s.* net.

ii. **To hold 100 Volumes** ordinary paper, or 200 Volumes thin paper, World's Classics size.

In Polished Mahogany or Mahogany French Stained and Ebonized, with fancy ornamental top, and three adjustable shelves, best cabinet make. Size 44 × 36 × 6 inches. Price 28*s.* net.


THE WORLD'S
HENRY·FROWDE·OXFORD·UNIVERSITY·PRESS


CLASSICS
LONDON·NEW YORK·TORONTO·MELBOURNE

